Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qurʾan

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Salim Rossier

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In the Name of God,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to God, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' God! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
David	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Aaron	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Joseph	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Mary	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imams, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـِ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Foreword

This volume comprises of the exegesis of two complete chapters, namely, Surah Maryam (Mary) and Surah Ṭā Hā.

The objective of Surah Maryam is to warn and give glad tidings and this is achieved by recounting the stories of a number of prophets including Mary and Jesus. In his exegesis of this chapter, the author presents a profound discussion about the appearance of Gabriel before Mary, the mother of Jesus, in human form. This is one of the significant discourses in *al-Mīzān*.

The aim of Surah Ṭā Hā is also to warn by way of reminding. It contains stories which conclude with the doom of the tyrants and those who reject God's communications. The chapter begins with the Prophet being consoled not to tire his holy self out trying to get people to answer his call contained in the Qur'an—as it was not revealed for him to be burdened by it. On the contrary the divine revelation was to remind people, of God and His signs in the hope that their instinct of fear would be aroused and they would awaken, believe in Him and be god-fearing. The author discusses the fifth verse of this chapter, *The Beneficent is firm in power*, from various angles and references many other similar verses in the Qur'an. The problem of literally interpreting this verse is also discussed.

Towards the end of the volume there is an interesting exposition of the story of Adam and his temporary Garden as this is the third place in the Qur'an where the story has appeared.

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About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imam, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers, particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and

1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others.

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knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mūsāwī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Mūsā, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* [Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism]. This book is a comparative

study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qurʾan with the help of the Qurʾan itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

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Chapter 19

Maryam (Mary)

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Verses 1-15

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

The purpose of the chapter (sūrah) is to warn and give glad tidings. This is evidenced by the chapter's concluding verses where God says: *So We have only made it easy in your tongue that you may give good news thereby to those who guard (against evil) and warn thereby a vehemently contentious people* (19:97).

This objective is achieved in an innovative approach that begins by recounting the stories of Zachariah and John [the Baptist], Mary and Jesus, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, Ishmael (Ismāʿīl) and Enoch (Idrīs) [peace be upon them all]. It describes that which was conferred to them of the favor (*niʿmah*) of divine guardianship (*wilāyāh*) such as Prophethood, truthfulness and purity of action. It then retells that these individuals, whom God favored, were known for their submission and humility to their Lord. Regrettably, the verses continue, they were succeeded by those that turned away from that path by becoming heedless to their Lord, following their base desires instead. In turn, they will ultimately meet their perdition and loose their rectitude. Only those of them that repent and return to their Lord will be joined with the people of divine favor (*niʿmah*).

The chapter then discusses selections of the blunders and delusions that the people of error fall into including (1) their denial of Hereafter, (2) their belief that "God has taken a son to Himself" [vide 19:88] and (3) their worship of idols. It then continues by depicting the punishment and retribution that they will face as a consequence of these devastating mistakes.

Hence, the discourse in this chapter can best be compared with that

of a prosecutor making his case by citing legal precedents. It is as if the chapter is saying: The approach of so-and-so and so-and-so, who were on the path of rectitude and were blessed by God, was to abstain from base desires, and to turn toward their Lord. Their custom was to be submissive and humble whenever the communications of their Lord were recited to them. This is mankind's approach to rectitude and divine favor (*niʿmah*). On the other hand, those who came after them abandoned this approach by turning away from righteous deeds toward reprehensible desires. This only led them to perdition as opposed to rectitude. Further, it only settled them in false beliefs such as denying the return to God and affirming partners for Him. It only drove them to obstruct the call to God and only led them into divine retribution and chastisement.

Therefore, as the reader can see, the chapter begins by providing examples to then deduce the universal lesson to be illustrated. A prime example is found in the verse: *These are they on whom God bestowed favors …*(19:58)

The chapter classifies people into three groups, namely (1) the top beneficiaries of God's favors, including the Prophets, the chosen ones and the people of guidance, (2) those people of error and perdition and (3) those who repent, believe and do righteous deeds, who will be joined with the people of God's favor (*niʿmah*) and of rectitude, the top beneficiaries of God's favors.

The chapter then discusses the reward of those who repent and seek rectitude, as well as the punishment of those in perdition. It describes the latter group as the peers and loyal associates of the devils.

This chapter was revealed in Mecca without a doubt, as shown and verified by the content of the verses and by the consensus of the exegetes.

كٓهٰيٰعٓصٓ ﴿١﴾

(19:1) ***Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād***

At the beginning of the exegesis of Sūrah al-ʾAʿrāf, it was mentioned [in Ar. vol. 8] that the chapters which begin with a combination of disjoint alphabetical letters (*ḥurūf-muqaṭṭaʿah*) are thematically linked to these opening letters. Hence, chapters that share the same opening letters will also contain common themes. This is supported by some of the links and similarities seen between this chapter and Sūrah Ṣād, [especially in] regard to telling the stories of the Prophets. There will be a comprehensive

discussion later on, God willing, on the links between the disjoint opening letters and the contents of the chapters which begin with them. In turn, a comparative analysis on the themes of chapters that share the same opening letters is in order. For example, we will compare this chapter and Sūrah Yā Sīn, insofar as they have the letter *yāʾ* in common, and this chapter and Sūrah al-Shūrā [The Counsel], insofar as they have the letter *ʿayn* in common.

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا ﴿٢﴾

(19:2) ***A mention* (dhikr)** ***of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zachariah.***

It is apparent from the context that 'mention' (*dhikr*) is the predicate of an implied subject. The verbal noun (that is, *dhikr*) is the same as the object. The implied meaning is: "This is a communication of your Lord's aforementioned (*madhkūr*) mercy". The 'aforementioned mercy' is God's answer to Zachariah's prayer, the details of which are in the story He immediately tells in the coming verses. This is evidenced by what He says subsequently: *When he called upon his Lord in a low voice.*

إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾

(19:3) ***When* (idh)** ***he called upon his Lord in a low voice.***

The locative object (*ẓarf*) [*idh* meaning "when"] is connected to the "mercy of your Lord". The words *nidāʾ* and *munādāt* both mean calling out loud. It is not contradictory to describe it as hidden (*khafiyy*) because it is possible to loudly call out in private without people hearing one's call. This is also the impression given by: "So he came out to his people from his place of worship". [19:11]

Some exegetes have said that the point of using the word *nidāʾ* is to convey the fact that he considered himself to be distanced from God due to his sins and poor circumstances, as is the condition of one who fears His punishment.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤﴾

(19:4) ***He said: My Lord! surely my bones are weakened and my***

head flares with gray, and, my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my supplication to You.

This opens the prelude to what he [Zachariah] is going to ask for: *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir*. He put the word *rabbī* (my Lord) first, at the beginning of the supplication, to seek and plead for divine mercy (*raḥmah*). The expression *innā* which contains *inna*, meaning 'surely', further affirms Zachariah's oneness with his total need [to God].

Wahn means weakness and deficiency in strength. He attributed this weakness to *al-ʿaẓm* (the bone) because it is the substructure that supports the body in motion and at rest. He did not say *al-ʿiẓam minnī* (these bones of mine) or *ʿaẓmī* (my bones). Instead, he referred to 'bones' by genus, pointing to the intrinsic characteristics of all bones. Hence, he stated that which applies generally before that which pertains particularly to himself.

And my head flares with gray: *ʾIshtiʿal* means the spread of a fire's flames and blaze in something which is burning. *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says: "*Wa [i]shtaʿala al-raʾsu shayban* is one of the most beautiful metaphors. It means that gray or white hair flared and spread around the head like a fire's diffusion". Here the intending meaning of diffusion (*shuʿāʿ*) is a fire's flames and blaze.

Shaqāwa which means misery is the opposite of *saʿāda* which means felicity. It means being deprived of good, which is concomitant to misery or is synonymous with it. *Bi duʿāʾika*, in my supplication to You, is linked to *shaqiyyan*, miserable. The letter *bāʾ* indicates causation (because of). Alternatively, it means *fī* (in). All together, it means: "I was fortunate because of my supplication to You. Every time I pray to You, You answer me without rendering me miserable". Another alternative is: "I have never been deprived and disappointed in my supplication to You. You have made me accustomed to Your response whenever I call You and to Your acceptance whenever I petition You". In any event the word *duʿāʾ*, supplication, is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) annexed to the object.

Some exegetes have said in the alternative that *bi duʿāʾika* is a verbal noun annexed to the subject, meaning: "I have never been wretched, rebellious, or disobedient to Your call to servitude and obedience, but rather I am servile to You and sincere in obedience to You". However, the previous interpretation is more likely.

There is eloquence beyond measure in repeating the word *rabbī* (my Lord) and positioning it between the subject and predicate of the verb

kān (was) in: *akun* (first person singular jussive form of the verb implying the subject) *bi duʿāʾika rabbī shaqiyyan* (predicate) (and, my Lord! I have never been wretched in my supplication to You). *Wa [i]jʿalhu rabbī raḍiyyan* (and make him, my Lord, one in whom You are well pleased) is similar to it.

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وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا

(19:5) ***And surely I fear my paternal uncles and and their sons* (mawālī)** ***after me, and my wife was barren …***

This completes the prelude to Zachariah's plea to God to grant him an heir from Himself. *Mawālī* here means paternal uncles and their sons. Other interpretations for *mawālī* that exegetes have adopted include (1) indirect heirs other than father or son relations (*kalālah*), (2) direct or indirect male heirs (*ʿuṣbah*), (3) the sons of paternal uncles exclusively and (4) heirs in general. Irrespective, it is clear that *mawālī* refers to heirs other than one's biological children. Hence the intended meaning is: "I fear the doing of the *mawālī* after me, meaning, after my death". He feared that he would die without children as heirs to inherit from him. Hence, *mawālī* was used as a metonymy to express the consequence that Zachariah feared: to die without anyone to carry after him [from his loins].

… and my wife was barren: A woman who is *ʿāqir* is one that cannot bear children while a man who is *ʿāqir* cannot beget any children. Hence, when he said: *and my wife was barren*, he, first, implied that she was barren and, secondly, that she has passed the childbearing age at the time of his supplication. The ability of this verse to be so concise and clear of repetition is due to (1) the fact that, *and my wife was barren* is a circumstantial phrase and (2) the segment of the verse from, *and surely I fear* till *was barren* is a single atomic unit. As a result, this segment of the verse could read as: "My wife's barrenness dictates that I should fear my paternal uncles and their sons (*mawālī*) after I have passed away".

Everything Zachariah said in prelude [, in verses 4 and 5,] to the heart of his supplication [, starting from "therefore grant from Yourself an heir" till the end of verse 6,] can be broken down into two parts. The first part is that God had answered his supplications time and again throughout his life, until he had become old and feeble. The second part is that he feared his paternal uncles and their sons after his death because of his

wife's barrenness. It is also reasonable to look at the words as comprised of three parts, taking the descriptions of his old age and his wife barrenness as two distinct parts.

فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ۝٥ يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ۝٦

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(19:5-6) ***… therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, Who should inherit from me and inherit from the children of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, pleasing.***

This is the actual core of Zachariah's supplication. The conditional clause "from Yourself" applied to "grant me" expresses Zachariah's despair from the ordinary means at his disposal, himself having become old and decrepit and having lost his strength and his wife having become old having previously been barren.

A person's *waliyy* is someone who takes charge of his affairs. The *waliyy* of the deceased is someone who takes care of his affairs and inherits his estate. A man's family (*āl*) is his elect and closest, [those] whom he is responsible for, example, his children, relatives, and companions. It is said that its etymological origin is *ahl*. Jacob, as some have said, means Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham. Alternatively, it is said that it means, Jacob son of Māthān, brother of of Amram son of Māthān. Amram son of Māthān is Mary's father and Zachariah's wife was Mary's sister. Hence, based on this interpretation, who should inherit from me and inherit from the children of Jacob means: "who should inherit from me and inherit from my wife who is a relative to Jacob's family". On the basis of this interpretation, the most likely grammatical explanation of *min* in *min Āl Yaʿqūb* is that it is partitive meaning "of Jacob's family", even though it would also be correct to interpret it as a locative meaning "from Jacob's family".

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In the phrase, *and make him, my Lord, pleasing* (raḍiyyan), *raḍiyy* means *marḍiyy*, that is, with whom God is well pleased. The lack of any specificity to *raḍiyy* broadens the scope of its applicability to include knowledge and deeds. Thus it depicts one whose belief and deeds are well-pleasing to God. All together it means: "My Lord, grace him with useful knowledge and good deeds".

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God told this story at the end of the account of Mary in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān [The Family of Amram] which is Medinite—that is, revealed

after [Sūrah] Mary, which is Meccan: … *So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing, and gave her into the charge of Zachariah; whenever Zachariah entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found with her food. He said: O Mary! whence comes this to you? She said: It is from God. Surely God gives to whom He pleases without measure He said: O Mary! whence comes this to you? She said: It is from God. Surely God gives to whom He pleases without measure. There did Zachariah pray to his Lord; he said: My Lord! grant me from You good offspring; surely You are the Hearer of supplication* (3:35-38).

Anyone reflecting on the above two verses should not be in any doubt that what led Zachariah to supplicate as he did, in verses 4 to 6, was seeing how Mary was esteemed in the sight of God by virtue of her servitude and sincerity of deeds. This sparked in Zachariah the desire to beseech God to grant him offspring as favored and esteemed before Him as was Mary. Then, he complained to God about his old age and infirmity and about the old age and barrenness which had befallen his wife. More so, he continued that his indirect heirs, his paternal uncles and their sons, did not have the aptitude to carry after him and the prospect of their indirect successorship grieved him. Notwithstanding, he was mindful and certain that his Lord repeatedly answered his supplications and sufficed him in every matter. Thus he sought refuge in his Lord, supplicating and evoking God to grant him a good offspring.

The divine words in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān: *My Lord! grant me from You good offspring* equates with the words in Sūrah Maryam: *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir who should inherit from me and inherit from the children of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, pleasing*.

The word "good" (*ṭayyibah*) [, in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān] equates with the words "and make him, my Lord, pleasing (*raḍiyyan*)". The intent of Zachariah when he supplicated for an offspring that would be well-pleasing was that they would have favor and esteem with God like he witnessed in Mary by virtue of her good deeds. In turn, *My Lord! grant me from You offspring* equates and explains, *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me and inherit from the children of Jacob.* Hence, an heir, who should inherit from me speaks of an heir directly from his offspring.

With this understanding, the incorrectness of the following claims becomes clear including those that said (1) that, *therefore grant me from*

Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me means that he was asking for someone to take his place, irrespective of whether he was a son or not, or (2) that He despaired of having a child with his wife so he asked for his successorship and role to be passed on to anyone deemed worthy, be he from any of his people. Furthermore, using the words, *therefore grant me* (hab lī) is suggestive of a type of ownership which cannot properly be said of anyone who is not a member of his family. Such non-familial relationships are best described with the expression *jaʿl*, making, as found in: … *and give us* (wa ajʿal lanā) *from You a guardian and give us* (wa ajʿal lanā) *from You a helper* (4:75).

Thus it is clear that, *an heir* (waliyy), *who should inherit from me* means offspring as it is referred to in the verse in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān by the term *dhurriyya* which means offspring. Hence, here *waliyy* (heir) equates with *dhurriyya* (offspring) and it is the custodian (*waliyy*) of one's inheritance. Further, the inheritance in question is that of the inheritance of the estate of the deceased including their wealth and material assets. No matter how we conceive of inheritance, without a doubt, material inheritance always comes to mind. On one hand, if we think of inheritance as literally implying the inheritance of wealth and property all while implying metaphorically the inheritance of immaterial possessions or attributes such as knowledge, then our conception of inheritance includes the material dimension. On the other hand, if we take inheritance to literally imply all aspects of inheritance, including the material and the immaterial, then our understanding of inheritance also includes the material. In any event, the apparent and most immediate meaning of the expression, *yarithunī—who should inherit from me,* is the inheritance of wealth and property. Hence, the intent in qualifying *waliyy*, which generally means guardian or custodian, with *yarithunī*, meaning *who should inherit from me*, is to denote a child or a biological heir. Moreover, the preceding phrase, *and surely I fear my paternal uncles and their sons after me*, serves to increase the likelihood of *an heir* (waliyy)*, who should inherit from me* meaning material inheritance. Further explanation of this is coming up, God willing.

The claim that, *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me* means inheritance of Prophethood and that he asked his Lord to grant him a son to inherit his Prophethood is refuted by what the reader has already learned. Zachariah's incentive to supplicate and make his request before God was what he witnessed in Mary. There is no oral

tradition or evidence for her having been a Prophetess. Hence, what link is there between his being impressed with her worship and her honor in the sight of God, and his asking his Lord for a son to inherit his Prophethood?

Moreover, Prophethood is not obviously hereditary. Even if we accept, for the sake of argument that inheritance here just means one Prophet coming after another or that a Prophet comes from the offspring of another through a kind of divine care, another problem would arise. Namely, based on this interpretation, it would be inappropriate to say subsequently: *and make him, my Lord, pleasing.* This is because it makes no sense to say: "Grant me a son who is a Prophet and make him one in whom You are well pleased". If it is construed as emphasis, it emphasizes something of a higher rank like Prophethood through something of a lower rank such as being well-pleasing.

A logical inconsistency also emerges in interpreting *raḍiyy* as pleasing to people because it opposes the broadness of applicability of the expression *raḍiyy*, as discussed above. This is in addition to the fact that this interpretation does not match the reason he had for saying this supplication as mentioned earlier.[1]

Almost as incorrect as the above interpretation is the claim that inheritance in, *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir* means inheritance of knowledge. In other words, he asked his Lord to grant him a son to inherit his knowledge. There is no causal link between Zachariah being impressed with Mary's worship and spiritual rank and his asking his Lord for a son to inherit his knowledge.

Other exegetes have said that inheritance means inheritance of knowledge and that, *And make him, my Lord, pleasing*, refers to good deeds. Beneficial knowledge and good deeds together, they continued, is the like of what he saw in Mary's sincerity, her worship, and her status with God. However, this is refuted by the fact that the clause, *and make him, my Lord, pleasing* (raḍiyy), alone suffices to recount that Zachariah evoked God to be granted a son that held beneficial knowledge and performed good deeds. As explained earlier, *raḍiyy*, is a standalone unbounded qualifier and encompasses both knowledge and deeds. However, if we accept the interpretation that well-pleasing describes a person who performs good deeds with little attention to knowledge, we contradict the premise

1 That is, seeing Mary's characteristics. See above (Trans.)

that well-pleasing (*marḍiyy*) meant pleasing in every way. Similarly, the claim that *raḍiyy* means pleasing to the people also does not align with the expression's broadness by restricting its application to one aspect without another.

Almost as incorrect is the claim that inheritance means the inheritance of piety (*taqwā*) and esteem and that he asked his Lord to grant him a son to inherit his [Zachariah's] closeness to God and his station in His sight.

Author's comment: It would have been appropriate for him in the context shown earlier with the related verses from Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān, to ask for a son as close and esteemed to God as was Mary, or simply to ask for a son that is close and esteemed in the absolute sense, and not to ask for a son to whom his own closeness and rank with God would pass. Furthermore, it does not fit with what he said, "And surely I fear my paternal uncles and their sons after me" because it is apparent from the context that he was asking for a son to inherit from him and to whom everything—that would otherwise pass to his indirect heirs (*mawālī*)—could pass. He feared that they would exploit that after his death. Of course, there is no reason to believe that he feared that his indirect heirs (*mawālī*) would gain proximity and rank with God and that they become God wary and noble, either before his death or after. Prophets stand aloof of any such miserliness. Their sole wish is nothing but the well-being and felicity of all people.

Some claim that his indirect heirs (*mawālī*) were the worst of the Children of Israel, so he feared that they would not be good successors to him in his nation after his death.

Author's comment: If this succession means divine esoteric spiritual succession, it is definitely not hereditary. More so, it never misses its rightful target and can only ever be assumed by its true owner. There is no reason to fear for it. If it means a worldly exoteric material succession, which is passed down through one's line or by similar means, it is then a societal acquisition and one of the chattels of life in this world—like property. Thus, there is no point in not interpreting the inheritance in the verse as inheritance of property and instead interpreting it as inheritance of succession and government.

Furthermore, John did not take [charge of] any of the caliphate or government, which would have indicated that [he saw it] as his inheritance and was thus depriving his father's kinsmen from inheriting it, nor did the Children of Israel have any dominion during the time of Zachariah

or John. On the contrary, they were under Roman occupation and rule.

Some exegetes have said that the interpretation of inheritance in the verse refers to the inheritance of knowledge and so on, not property. They explain that this is supported by the fact that there is not even a fly's wingspan's inclination toward worldly chattels in the high outlooks and highest aspirations possessed by holy souls—especially Zachariah's—which have cut themselves off from attachments to this fleeting, ephemeral world, and instead cling to the everlasting world. Zachariah was well-known for being completely cut off and detached, so ordinarily it would be impossible for him to worry, show concern, sorrow or fear on account of the inheritance of money and chattels which by his high standards did not have the slightest value. Saying that he made a supplication like this to his Lord for such motives would falsely imply that his heart was completely attached and in love with this world and its embellishments. Further, they continue, that saying that he asked his Lord for a pleasing heir because he feared his kinsmen would spend his money on what they should not after his death also lacks evidence. They elaborate that when a man dies and his property passes through inheritance to another, it becomes the property of the beneficiary. From there, spending it is the beneficiary's responsibility irrespective of whether he does so properly or wrongly, and there is no censure or blame on the deceased. Further, they go on, dispelling this fear would have been easy for him, as he could have disposed of all his money before his death, and given it all to charity on God's path, [thereby] leaving his evil paternal cousins disappointed because of their bad ways and repugnant deeds. Hence, they conclude, his only motive for asking for a son was to apply God's laws, spread the Shariah, and for Prophethood to continue in his offspring.

Author's comment: The objection presented above is based on the belief that [his supplication], *grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me*, is a request for his offspring to inherit his property, when in fact the opposite is true. His primary motive behind saying, an heir, who should inherit me, was to ask for a son, as is also clear from the direct speech cited: … *My Lord! grant me from You good offspring*, and elsewhere (3:38), … *O my Lord leave me not alone* (21:89).

The clause, *who should inherit from me*, is just a contextual indication that *waliyy* here means heir, that is, son because the word, *wilāyah* (guardianship), has a general meaning applicable in different ways. The

only way the specific meaning of *wilāyah* can be disambiguated is with a contextual identifier. For example, in: … *and they shall have no friends* (awliyāʾ) *to help them besides God* (42:46), the guardianship (*wilāyah*) is qualified as being a guardianship of help and support. Another example is in: … *and (as for) the believing men and the believing women, they are guardians* (awliyāʾ) *of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil* (9:71). Here *wilāya* means upholding societal balance because it is qualified by enjoining good and forbidding evil. There are other examples.

With this understanding, it becomes clear that if there had been no indication of financial inheritance to designate the nature of the guardianship (*wilāyat*) in question, there would be nothing left to indicate that a son is being asked for, which was the very purpose of the supplication. Inheritance of knowledge, Prophethood, worship, and spiritual status do not signify that an inheritor is [necessarily] a son, as confirmed by exegetes that understood the verse to refer to inheritance of one of these kinds. Without a qualifier to the type of guardian (*waliyy*) being asked for, the supplication is rendered empty of its desired intent. This response is sufficient to render the above argument without foundation.

In summary, the true purport of his request is that he wanted a son. He did not really want an heir to his "fortune". That was just a contextual clue that what he really meant by heir was a son. True, by the fact itself, it indicates that if he had a son he would inherit his property. Even so, in the expression, *an heir, who should inherit me*, or likewise in his words, *and surely I fear my paternal uncles and cousins after me,* there is no indication of his heart being attached to the temporal world or to its deceptive embellishments.

As for asking for a son, it is part of the instinct which God has placed in the entire human race good and bad, Prophet and non-Prophet alike. He equipped everyone with a procreative system and placed in everyone the instinct to procreate. Everyone, provided his instinct has not deviated, is drawn toward trying to have children. He sees the survival of his child after his own death as a survival of himself and their taking possession of the necessities of life which he had been in possession of—inheritance—as his own possession and own livelihood.

The divine codes of law did not repeal this instinctive law or criticize this instinctive drive. On the contrary, they praise it and encourage it. There are many verses in the noble Qur'an that indicate this, for example,

quoting Abraham: *My Lord! grant me of the doers of good deeds* (37:100)*; Praise be to God, who has given me in old age Ishmael* [Ismāʿīl] *and Isaac* [Isḥāq]*; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of supplication* (14:39), and, quoting the believers: … *O our Lord! grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes* … (25:74) There are other similar verses.

You may say that the above explanation of the meaning of inheritance was based on an inference from "There did Zachariah pray to his Lord" (3:38), that what made him ask for a child was seeing Mary's worship and spiritual rank. He then wanted to be blessed with a child who could equal her in worship and spiritual status. However, it is also possible that his motivation was something else. Some oral traditions say that Zachariah would find fruits out of season around Mary—winter fruits in summer and summer fruits in winter. He then said to himself: If it is not difficult for God to provide winter fruit in summer and summer fruit in winter, then it would not be difficult for him to provide me with a child "out of season"—my being old and my wife being barren. Thereafter, he said: *… therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me*. Thus, seeing fruit out of season made him ask for a child "out of season". However, this noble Prophet was too honorable to ask for a child to inherit his property. He only asked for one to inherit Prophethood or knowledge or worship and rank in the sight of God.

Author's comment: There is no evidence in the wording of (3:37) that *rizq*, meaning sustenance, specifically means fruit out of season and that what made Zachariah ask for a child was either witnessing that or Mary's telling him, Surely God gives to whom He pleases without measure. If it were the case that it was Zachariah's motivation, it would have been alluded to more clearly. Rather, what is conveyed from the apparent, from the context, especially the beginning of the verse (3:37)—"So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow well"[1]—is that Mary was had reached such a high rank with her Lord that He provided for her in a manner than transcended natural means. This spiritual rank was the real motive that inspired Zachariah to ask for good offspring and a son with whom God would be well pleased.

If that is conceded, what it means is that Zachariah was provoked first

1 *God accepted her offering graciously and caused her to grow up admirably* (Tarif Khalidi's translation) (Ed.)

into asking for offspring—a son. Since he was a noble Prophet he had no desire to have anything other than a good son, so he prayed, secondly, for him to be good and one in whom God would be well pleased. This is evidenced by the remainder of his supplication by saying: … *and make him, my Lord, one in whom You are well pleased* and qualifying him as "good" in "good offspring".

He said what he meant, according to his direct speech attributed to him in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān … *grant me from You good offspring*, and in this chapter—after first making reference to his old age, his wife's barrenness and his fear of his kinsmen, he said, … *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me.* Here, *An heir who should inherit from me*, means a son, without a doubt. He just referred to by giving it the title of guardianship in inheritance (*wilāyah al-ʾirth*). Guardianship in inheritance (*wilāyah al-ʾirth*), which can always be taken as a qualifier for a son, is the guardianship that exclusively entitles him to the inheritance of what has been left behind by the deceased parent.

As for (1) guardianship in inheritance of Prophethood—if it is correct to refer to it as inheritance, (2) guardianship in inheritance of knowledge, where the student inherits his teacher's knowledge, and (3) guardianship in inheritance of esoteric rank and spiritual status, all of these are independent of lineage. At times they are accompanied with familial ties and at times they are not. Hence, each of these types of 'inheritances' cannot be used to infer lineage or birthright without strong evidence. However, there nothing in the wording of the verse that can provide convincing clues. Whatever may be deemed fit to make a case can also be used to show the opposite. As a result, holding on the idea that the inheritance refers to one of Prophethood, knowledge or spiritual rank is tantamount to leaving the primary and immediately meaning to busy oneself with what could be behind it. That alone should suffice as a refutation of the claim.

يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ لَمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٧﴾

(19:7) *O Zachariah! surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be John. We have not made before anyone his equal.*

There is an omission for the sake of brevity in the sentence, *O Zachariah! surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be John*. The implied meaning is, *so We answered him and called to him: O*

Zachariah! Surely We give you good news of a boy whose name shall be John.

Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ [The Prophets] says: *So We responded to him and gave him John* (21:90). Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān [The Family of Amram] says: *Then the Angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That God gives you the good news of John* (3:39).

The verse in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān is evidence that, *O Zachariah! surely We give you good news …* was revealed through the Angels, that is, His Words were passed on by the Angels to Zachariah. It is clearer in the second statement: *He said: So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy for Me* (19:9). There is an indication in the verse that it was God who named John—*whose name shall be John* (Yaḥyā)—and that no one before him had been given this name: *We have not made before anyone* (samiyyā), that is, anyone who shares the same name. It would not be surprising if *samiyy* meant equal to him as outlined below, that is, *so serve Him and be patient in His service: Do you know anyone equal to Him* (samiyyā) … (19:65). Further testimony to this is the fact that God conferred upon him epithets accorded to none of His Prophets and friends before him, for example: … *and We granted him wisdom while yet a child* (19:12); … *and honorable and chaste* (3:39); *And peace on him on the day he was born, and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life* (19:15).

Even though, his maternal cousin, the Messiah, shared some of these epithets except that he was born after John.

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا ﴿٨﴾

(19:8) *He said: O my Lord! when shall I have a son* (ghulām)*, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age:*

Al-Rāghib says:

> A *ghulām* is one who has begun to grow a mustache. Alternatively, it is said that a *ghulām* refers to a human male in the period between birth to the age of seventeen. He said [quoting Zachariah]: *when shall I have a son* (ghulām). In Arabic the verb *ightalama* means he reached the age of puberty.

Majmaʿ al-bayān says:

> *Al-ʿatiyy* and *al-ʿaṣiyy* mean the same thing. Third person perfect

tense: *ʿatā*; third person present tense: *yaʿtū*; absolute object: *ʿutuwwan or ʿatiyyan*. Third person perfect tense: *ʿaṣā*; third person present tense: *yaʿṣū*; absolute object: *ʿuṣuwwan or ʿaṣiyyan*. Someone is said to be *ʿātin* or *ʿāṣin* if time has turned them dry. Reaching the age of *al-ʿatiyy* is an allusion to the loss of libido and an end to the means of procreation.

Zachariah's question about the birth of a son despite his wife's barrenness and his own extreme old age, notwithstanding his own reference to both matters in his supplication, *My Lord! surely my bones are weakened …*, stems from his astonishment at these glad tidings and his desire for clarification of its particularity. It is not an indication that he considered it to be unlikely, nor is it a denial of it. Someone who is given good news of something which is unexpected because of there being impediments and the lack of means to achieve it becomes restless when he first hears it. He starts asking about the particulars of what he has been given good news about to put his heart at rest and to calm the disturbance within his soul. In spite of that, he is certain of the truthfulness of what he has been given good news of. Indeed, passing thoughts may not stop in spite of one's knowledge and firm belief. Something similar was said by way of exegesis (in Eng. vol. 2) of: *And when Abraham said: My Lord! show me how You give life to the dead, He said: What! and do you not believe? He said: Yes, but that my heart may be at ease* (2:260).

قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْـًٔا ﴿٩﴾

(19:9) *He said: So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy for Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing.*

This is an answer to what he asked and sought clarification on to put his soul at rest and calm his heart. The pronoun in "He said" refers to God and *kadhālik* (lit. "like that") is a direct speech quotation. It is the predicate of an implied subject. The implied meaning is: "It is like that, that is, the matter will come to pass as We have told you of it in the good news. There is no doubt about it".

The words, *your Lord says: It is easy for Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing,* are a second direct speech quotation introduced by the initial "He said". It is like an explanation for *kadhālik* (like

that). All amazement is dispelled because His will does not fail to happen: *His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is* (36:82).

Thus, creating a boy from a man who had reached old age and a woman who was barren was easy for Him.

In the same story, as told in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān, the question and answer are worded as: *He said: My Lord! when shall there be a son (born) to me, and old age has already come upon me, and my wife is barren? He said: even thus God does what He pleases* (3:40).

Thus, *It is easy for Me*, parallels, *does God what He pleases*. It supports the interpretation presented above. Further, *and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing*, gives an example of creation which clears up any astonishment.

Other explanations have been given for the verse, none of which are supported by the context, including:

1) *Kadhālik* is linked to the second "said" (*qāl*). The sentence put all together is the response. It means: Your Lord ordered that and passed judgment thus. *It is easy for Me* is either another part of the direct speech, or it is narrative.

2) (The clause), … *your Lord says* is addressed to the Prophet , not to Zachariah.

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً ۚ قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا

(19:10) *He said: My Lord! give me a sign. He said: Your sign is that you will not be able to speak to the people three nights while in sound health.*

As mentioned above in the narrative from Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān (3:37-41), the glad tidings came to Zachariah through the medium of the Angels who then called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: *That God gives you the good news of John*. Zachariah asked for a distinguishing sign that would separate truth from falsehood and to confirm that the call he heard was an Angelic revelation and not a satanic inception. For this reason, he received a divine distinguishing sign to which Satan had no control—knowing that Prophets are already granted divine immunity such that Satan can have no control over them.

He said: My Lord! give me a sign is a request for a distinguishing sign.

God's response was: *your sign is that you will not be able to speak to the people three nights while in sound health*. Hence, his tongue will be restrained from uttering anything except for the remembrance of God , all while he will be *sawiyy*, that is, in sound health without any sickness or ailment.

Here, not speaking to the people means not being able to speak to them. This is like saying the consequence (*lāzim*) [which in this case is 'not speaking'], but meaning, metonymically, the antecedent (*malzūm*) [which in this case is 'not being able to speak']. Three nights means three nights along with their days, which is common usage. He remembered God with a variety of remembrance (*dhikr*), but was only able to communicate with people using sign language and gestures. Proof of all that is in His words telling the story in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān: *He said: My Lord! appoint a sign for me. He [God] said: Your sign is that you should not speak to men for three days except by signs; and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and the morning* (3:41).

فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿١١﴾

(19:11) ***So he went forth to his people from his place of worship (*****al-miḥrāb*****), then he made known to them (*****fa awḥā ilayhim*****) that they should glorify (God) morning and evening.***

Majmaʿ al-bayān says: A *miḥrāb* is so-called because someone who is turned toward it in his supplication is like someone combating (*muḥārib*) the Devil over his prayer. The etymological origin is the council of nobles which is a forum in which each person fends for the interests of his family and kinsmen. *ʾAwḥā* is a past tense verb that shares the same root with *Īḥāʾ* which means communicating something meaningful secretly and quickly. The etymological origin is captured in the saying: *al-Waḥyā! al-Waḥyā!* which means: Hurry! Hurry!

With this, the meaning of the verse is clear.

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴿١٢﴾ وَحَنَانًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً

(19:12-13) ***O John! take hold of the Book with strength, and We granted him wisdom (*****ḥukm*****) while yet a child. And tenderness from Us and an increase …***

There is repeated reference in His words to taking hold of the Book with strength and the commandment to do so as in: … *so take hold of them with firmness and enjoin your people to take hold of what is best thereof* … (7:145); … *Take hold of the law (Torah) We have given you with firmness and bear in mind what is in it* … (2:63) and … *Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and be obedient* (2:93).

There are other verses that also have this idea. Their context bring to mind that taking hold of the Book with firmness means becoming one with its knowledge and sciences and acting in accordance with its laws, diligently and conscientiously.

Part of the verse is implied whereas the other part is kept short, all for the purpose of brevity. The implied meaning is: "When We granted him John, We told him: John, take the Book firmly both with regard to knowledge and deed". Based on this interpretation, it is reasonable to take 'the Book' as the Torah[1] or, alternatively, the Torah along with all of the other Prophets' Books, because the Book which contained the code of religious law (*sharīʿa*) at that time was the Torah.

… and We granted him wisdom* (ḥukm) *while yet a child and tenderness from Us and an increase … : The word *ḥukm* has been interpreted as understanding, intellect, wisdom, knowledge of the etiquette of service, true discernment, and Prophethood. However, *ḥukm* does not mean Prophethood as can be inferred from verses such as: *And certainly We gave the Book and the wisdom* (al-ḥukm) *and the Prophethood to the children of Israel …* (45:16) *These are they to whom We gave the Book and the wisdom and the Prophethood …* (6:89)

Other verses also show that *ḥukm* does not mean Prophethood. The same applies to interpreting it as knowledge of the etiquette of service, true discernment or intellect because there is no evidence to support any of these interpretations from the literal form of the word (*lafz*) or from its inferred meaning (*maʿnā*). It may be reminiscent of verses such as the following: … *who shall recite to them Your communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom* (al-ḥikma), *and purify them* (2:129); and … *who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom* (al-ḥikma) (62:2).

In terms of construction, *ḥikma* (wisdom) is a type of *ḥukm*. *Ḥukm*

1 It is not far-fetched to believe that John was conferred his own celestial book.

means knowledge of true, divine gnosis/sciences (*maʿārif*) and revealing that which is not disclosed to normal perception. This may be the reason why *ḥukm* is interpreted as understanding.

Based on the above, the meaning is: "Verily, We gave him knowledge of true sciences (*maʿārif haqīqiyya*) while he was still a child, before he had even reached puberty (*ḥulm*)".

The words, *And tenderness from Us* are linked by the conjunction "and" to the predicate, *granted him wisdom while yet a child.* The meaning thus rendered is: "And We granted him tenderness from Us". *Ḥanān* means compassion and sympathy.

Al-Rāghib says: Because sympathy never separates from mercy (*raḥmah*) it is referred to as *ḥanān* in His Words, *And tenderness from Us*. Other examples are the Names of God, *al-Ḥannān al-Mannān* (The Tender, the Benefactor). *Ḥanānik* means, sympathy after sympathy [coming from You].

Ḥanān has been interpreted in several ways including that:

1) It is mercy meaning Prophethood or guardianship, as in Noah's words: … *and He has granted me mercy from Himself* (11:28) and Ṣāliḥ's words: … *and He has granted to me mercy from Himself* (11:63).

2) It is love. It may mean people's love for him, as in: … *and I cast down upon you love* (maḥabba) *from Me* (20:39), meaning no one would see him without loving him.

3) It is his being compassionate, merciful, and gentle with people. He was kind to them and would advise them sincerely, guide them to God, and tell them to repent. That is why he is called John (Yuḥanna) the Baptist in the New Testament.

4) It is God's love for him—whenever he called his Lord, according to oral tradition, God would answer him. This proves that God had special love for him, as also evidenced by the use of *ḥanān* in the indefinite.

Tenderness (*ḥanān*) being qualified as "from Us", which is only used when characterizing what transcends and goes beyond normal or natural causes, tells us that it means a unique, divine, unprecedented kind of fondness and affinity between him and his Lord. Thus the second and third interpretations are refuted.

Next, it is followed up with *zakātan*. The root meaning of the word is sound incorrupt growth. It does not fit in well with the first interpretation. Therefore, either this segment of the verse is referring to God's love

and special care for Zachariah upon which he grew and was nurtured, or it means the love and affinity Zachariah had for his Lord and upon which he grew. Here, the growth is the growth of the soul (*rūḥ*). Thus, the weakness of the following claims becomes manifest:

1) *zakāt* means blessing—in the sense of his being blessed, helpful, and a teacher of good;

2) *zakāt* means charity, that is, We granted him wisdom during his formation as a charity to the people; or, it is charity from God to John's parents, or, the wisdom given is charity from God to him; and

3) *zakāt* means being free of sins.

وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٣﴾ وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ﴿١٤﴾

(19:13-14) *… and he was one who guarded (against evil), and dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient.*

Taqiyy is an adjective derived from *taqwā*, coming from the root word *waqaya* which has the vowel *waw* as its first letter (*mithāl wāwī*). *Taqwā* means guarding against what God has forbidden and avoiding forbidden acts which lead to punishment by God. *Barr* is an adjective derived from *birr* which means excellence in deeds (*ʾiḥsān*).

Majmaᶜ al-bayān says: "Someone who is *jabbār* is someone who believes that no one else has any right over him, who has conceit and haughtiness. Jabbār is said of part of a date palm which is beyond one's reach". It can be interpreted as arrogant or haughty, and is said of someone who makes people put up with whatever he wants but someone who is unwilling to put up with anything from them. This interpretation is supported by its being followed by *ᶜaṣiyy* which is an adjective derived from *ᶜiṣyān* the root meaning of which is defiance.

It is clear that the three descriptive segments in the verse explain how he was with his Creator and with creation. *And he was one who guarded (against evil)*—explains how he was with his with his Lord. *And dutiful to his parents*—explains how he was with his parents. *And he was not insolent, disobedient*—explains how he was with everyone else. He was kind and compassionate with people, advising them sincerely, humbly, helping the weak among them and guiding those who sought guidance. It is also clear that the claim by some that *ᶜaṣiyyan* means disobedient to his Lord is not correct.

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

(19:15) ***And peace on him on the day he was born, and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life.***

The word *salām* (peace) means almost the same as *ʾamn* (safety). It appears from respective usages that the difference between the two is that *ʾamn* means that the locus is free of what a person hates and fears, whereas *salām* refers to the locus' being such that everything a person finds in it suits him without his disliking or fearing it.

Salāmun is in the indefinite to indicate magnificence, that is, magnificent peace will be upon him from what he would dislike on those three days. Each of these days is the start of one of the worlds which Mankind enters and lives in. Peace will be upon him the day he is born, that is, no unpleasantness which would interfere with his happiness will touch him. Peace will be upon him on the day he dies—he will live a blissful life in the *barzakh*. Peace will be upon him the day he is raised to life—he will live truly there without weariness or exhaustion.

It is claimed that the added qualifier *ḥayyan*, which means alive, implies that he will be martyred. This is because of what God says about martyrs: … *nay, they are alive [and] are provided sustenance from their Lord* (3:169).

Note that the use of different tenses in "he was born, "he dies" and "he is raised" informs that the greetings of peace would be said to him during the course of his eternal life time.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says that the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī said in his supplication to God: I ask You, O *Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād.*

(2) al-Ṣādiq said: *"Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād* means, I am the Sufficient *(al-Kāfī),* the Guide *(al-Hādī),* the Guardian *(al-Waliy),* the Omniscient *(al-ʿĀlim),* the Faithful to His Promises *(al-Ṣādiq al-Waʿd)".*[1]

Author's comment: Also narrated in it is something similar on the

1 *Maʿānī l-akhbār* via its chain of narration back to Sufyān b. Saʿīd al-Ṯhawrī in a narrated hadith

authority of Muḥammad b. ʿImāra on the authority of al-Ṣādiq.

(3) *Al-Durr al-manthūr* says on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās about the words, *Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād*: "[It means, God is] Great (*Kabīr*), Guiding (*Hadīn*), Honest (*Amīn*), Mighty (*ʿAzīz*), Truthful (*Ṣādiq*). [Another version] says Sufficient (*Kafīn*) instead of Great (*Kabīr*)".

(4) It is also narrated on his authority via a different chain of narration that it [*Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād*] means: "Generous (*Karīm*), Guiding (*Hadīn*), Wise (*Ḥakīm*), Omniscient (*ʿAlīm*), Truthful (*Ṣādiq*)". That is also narrated on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd and others.

Author's comment: As the reader can see, the narrations are generally [about] the first letters of the most beautiful names [of God], for example, the [letter] *Kāf* is taken from *al-Kāfī*, *al-Kabīr* or *al-Karīm* etc. However, this is not true of the *Yāʾ* because according to the oral traditions, some say it is taken from *al-Waliyy* (the Guardian), *al-Ḥakīm* (the Wise) or *al-ʿAzīz* (the Mighty).

(5) God's Messenger (pbuh) said that it [*Kāf Hāʾ Yāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād*] means: Sufficient (*Kafī*), Guide (*Hadīn*), Omniscient (*ʿAlīm*), Truthful (*Ṣādiq*).[1]

Author's comment: The letter *Yāʾ* is left out in this narration. There was some allusion to this in the commentary of the verse (above).

(6) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about His Words , *I have never been shaqiyyan in my supplication to You:* My supplication has never been unsuccessful with You.

(7) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says on the authority of al-Ṣādiq, about His Words, *And surely I fear the mawālī*: It is said that they are the paternal uncles and their sons. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī l-Bāqir recited [verse 5 as] *innī khaffati [a]l-mawāl* with a *fatḥa* (short vowel "a") above the letter *khāʾ*, a double *fāʾ* and a *kasra* (short vowel "i") below the *tāʾ*, meaning that: "I am taken lightly by my *mawālī* and the object of their mistreatment".

Author's comment: A number of Companions and successors used to recite it the same way.

(8) *Al-Iḥtijāj* says: When Abū Bakr resolved to deprive Fāṭima of the land in Fadak and news of that reached her, she came to him

1 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Umm Hānī

and said to him: Son of Abū Qaḥāfa, does God's Book say that you inherit from your father but I do not inherit from my father? Surely you have done a strange thing. Have you intentionally forsaken the Book of God and flung it away behind your backs? For, He says in what He tells of the story of John son of Zachariah: … *therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me and inherit from the children of Jacob …*[1]

Author's comment: The content of this oral tradition is narrated via various chains by the Shia and others. Her [Fāṭima's] reasoning is based on inheritance in the verse meaning inheritance of property. That was discussed above in the commentary on the verse. Some proof of that is narrated in the Sunni chains of narration.

(9) God's Messenger said: May God have mercy on my brother Zachariah. He did not have any heirs. May God have mercy on my brother Lot. He had recourse to a mighty support.[2]

(10) Ibn ᶜAbbās said: "No children would be begotten by Zachariah so he asked his Lord (19:5-6): *My Lord, grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit from me and inherit from the Family of Jacob.* [Ibn ᶜAbbās] said: [It means] he should inherit my property and inherit Prophethood from the Family of Jacob".[3]

(11) *Ruḥ al-maᶜānī* says: The position taken by Ahl al-Sunna is that the Prophets neither inherit nor leave property because of the authentic oral traditions they have.The same is also reported by the Shia as follows: al-Ṣādiq said: "The scholars are the heirs to the Prophets. That is because the Prophets have inherited neither dirham nor dinar. They (the scholars) have certainly (*innamā*) inherited some of their hadiths. Anyone who learns any of them has received an abundant share".[4] The word *innamā* is indubitably restrictive as accepted by the Shia. The "inheritance" in the verse is construed as you have heard and we do not concede it to be

1 Narrated by ᶜAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan via his chain of narration on the authority of his forefathers

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of a number of compilers of *hadith* collections on the authority of al-Ḥasan

3 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of al-Fāriyābī

4 *al-Kāfī* narrated by Al-Kulaynī on the authority of al-Bakhtarī

a literal, dictionary definition of an inheritance of property. On the contrary its significance is encompassing of inheritance of knowledge, position and property. It has only become exclusive to property because of the predominant conventional usage by jurists, as with any other change due conventional usage. Even if we did concede that it is used for that [that is, knowledge, etc.] metaphorically, it is a well-known metaphor especially in the glorious Qur'an, such that it is equal to the literal meaning. Examples of this are as follows:

(35:32) *Then We gave the Book for an inheritance to those whom We chose from among Our servants*; *Then there came after them an evil posterity who inherited the Book* (7:169); *… and those who were made to inherit the Book after them* (42:14); *He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases* (7:128); *… and God's is the heritage of the Heavens and the earth* (3:180 and 57:10).

They said, there is no need to depart from the literal meaning. We say that there is a need. [There is a need] to defend the words of an infallible figure (that is, the Prophet) from any accusation of falsehood. Further, it is extremely difficult to give an alternative interpretation to what is immediately apparent of these words [that is, the hadith]. As for the oral traditions which say that they [the Prophets] leave property to their heirs, they cannot hold trial before sound appraisal. Some claim, Ālūsī continues, that it cannot be construed as inheritance of Prophethood, so as not to render [the clause], *and make him, my Lord, pleasing*, redundant. What we have said above explains the problem with this claim. The claim that the impossibility of of earning (*kasb*) something stops it from being inheritable is also baseless because al-Ṣādiq's words which do refer to the inheritance of something which cannot be earned (*kasbiyy*). Another example of that is what al-Ṣādiq said: Solomon inherited from David and verily Muḥammad inherited from Solomon.[1] Hence, it is only conceivable for the Prophet's inheritance from Solomon to be inheritance of knowledge, Prophethood, and the likes.

Author's comment: There is a theological aspect to the discussion

1 *al-Kāfī* narrated by Al-Kulaynī

which goes back to the matter of Fadak, which is one of the townships of Khaybar. It was in the possession of Fāṭima, the daughter of Muḥammad. However, the first caliph subsequently seized it from her possession, relying on a hadith narrated on the authority of the Prophet : "Verily the Prophets do not bequeath property. What they leave behind is charity". There is a long-standing dispute between Shia and Sunni theologians [about this]. It is a type of discussion which is beyond the scope of this book so we shall not address it. However, there is an exegetical aspect and addressing this does concern us because it is connected to the meaning of [the verse]: *And surely I fear my paternal uncles and cousins after me, and my wife is barren, therefore grant me from Yourself an heir, who should inherit me and inherit from the children of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, one in whom You are well pleased* (19:5-6).

As for his [Ālūsī, the author of *Ruḥ al-maʿānī*] words, "it is also reported by the Shia … ", the oral tradition on the matter is not confined to what he narrates on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. On the contrary, words to the same effect are narrated via their chains on the authority of the Prophet . It means—as anyone hearing it immediately realizes—that it is not appropriate for Prophets to concern themselves with amassing property and leaving it to their surviving heirs after their death. It is only appropriate for them to leave wisdom to those surviving them. This is a palatable concept and common usage which cannot be refuted.

As for his Words: "we do not concede it to be a literal, dictionary definition of an inheritance of property", the point is not whether its literal, dictionary definition is one thing or whether it is commonly or rarely used as a metaphor. None of these matters need to be pursued. Whether *wirātha* (inheritance) is used literally to mean inheritance of property or metaphorically to mean inheritance of things like knowledge or wisdom, or, whether it can literally mean inheritance of all of property, knowledge and wisdom is not the determining factor to answer the question. Ascertaining that the inheritance alluded to in the verse is that of knowledge and wisdom requires either evidence that diverts away (*qarīna ṣārifa*) from a given type of inheritance or evidence that specifically indicates (*qarīna muʿayyina*) a given type of inheritance. The context provided by this verse and all the other verses telling the story in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān and Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ [The Prophets] along with all the contextual indicators surrounding them make it impossible for (the clause), *who should inherit*

me, even to mean inheritance of knowledge etc, let alone diverting from it, or indicating it, as explained in the commentary above.

True, it is not correct for Prophethood to be the inherited thing based on what can be inferred from Qur'anic teachings, that is, it is a divine gift which cannot be transferred or passed on. There is no doubt that leaving [something] behind and transferring [something] are part of the definition of inheritance, like the inheritance of property, ownership, station, knowledge etc. That is the reason in the Book and the Sunnah, inheritance is not used in relation to Prophethood or becoming a Messenger.

As for his Words, "there is a need, namely, to defend the words of an infallible figure from any accusation of falsehood", it is an acknowledgement that there is no contextual indication provided by the surrounding verses that [the clause], *who should inherit me*, does not mean property. In fact, the opposite is true. The only thing that forced them to construe it as such is defending the literal meaning of the hadith that they deem to be authentic. The intended meaning of God's words cannot depend on other clues especially if they are not from His Words and when the surrounding context indicates the opposite. This is contrary to setting the specifics and the constraints of jurisprudential narrations based on the universals of jurisprudential verses in the Qur'an. Doing this is tantamount to skewing the intended meaning of the divine discourse and cannot be seen as simply extracting the intended meaning based on its different linguistic usages.

Furthermore, oral traditions with one chain of narration (*āḥād*) do not hold any jurisprudential imperative (*ḥijjiyah*) with regards to that which is other than the jurisprudential rulings. Note that jurisprudential rulings fall exclusively under the umbrella of legislative divine making (*al-jaʿl al-tashrīʿī*). This is especially true if these one-chain narrations oppose the Qur'an. Of course, these principles are well established in the science of jursprudential universals (*ʿilm al-ʿuṣūl*).

[Ālūsī's statement], "What we have said above explains the problem with this claim …" shows that he interprets [the clause], and make him, my Lord, *raḍiyyan*, as emphasizing [the clause], *an heir, who should inherit from me*, and taking it to refer to the inheritance of Prophethood. Alternatively, he also proposed that *raḍiyyan* is interpreted as pleasing to the people, to exalt the Quran from redundancy. What we have said above explains the problem with this claim.

(12) Abū ʿAbdillāh said: When Zachariah prayed to his Lord to grant

him offspring and the Angels called what they called to him, he then wanted to know if that voice was from God. In turn, it was revealed to him that the sign of that was that his tongue would be restrained from talking for three days. When his tongue was restrained and he could not speak, he realized that no one but God could do that.[1]

(13) al-Ṣādiq said: The Commander of the Faithful said when asked what *waḥy* means: It can either mean Prophetic revelation (*waḥy al-nubuwwa*), inspiration (*waḥy al-ilhām*) or allusion (*waḥy al-ishāra*). This led him to comment: An example of an allusion is: So he went forth to his people from his place of worship, then he made known (*fa awḥā*) to them that they should glorify God morning and evening, that is, he signaled to them. It is like His words: … *you should not speak to men for three days except by signs* (3:41).[2]

(14) Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā said:[3] The boys said to John: Let's go and play. He replied: We were not created to play. So God revealed: … *and We granted him wisdom while yet a child* (19:12).

Author's comment: This thematic purport is narrated on the authority of the Prophet .[4]

(15) ʿAlī b. Asbāṭ said: I saw Abū Jaʾfar. He had come to see me so I took a good look at him. I began looking at his head and his feet to describe his stature to our Companions in Egypt. I carried on doing so until he sat down and said: "ʿAlī, God used as evidence for the Imamate what He used as evidence for Prophethood". He then said [recited]: … *and We granted him wisdom while yet a child* (19:12);

… *until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years* (46:15).

It is possible for him to be given wisdom while yet a child and possible for him to be given wisdom when he is a forty-year-old man.[5]

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1 *Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī on the authority of Abū Baṣīr

2 *Tafsīr,* al-Nuʿmānī via its chain of narration

3 *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of Muʿammar

4 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn ʿAsākir on the authority of Muʿādh on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās

5 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration

Author's comment: The oral tradition interprets *ḥukm* as wisdom, supporting what we said above.

(16) Qatāda said about (the words), … *and he was not insolent, disobedient*: Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab would say: the Prophet said: No one except John, son of Zachariah, will meet God on the Day of Resurrection without sin.

(17) Qatāda (also) said: al-Ḥasan said: The Prophet said: John, son of Zachariah, did not ever sin or make for a woman.[1]

(18) Ibn ʿAbbās said: The Prophet said: No one from the Children of Adam has not sinned or nearly sinned except John son of Zachariah. He did not even come close to sinning or actually doing so.[2]

Author's comment: This purport is narrated in various wordings by the Ahl al-Sunna. They must all be construed as referring to infallible Prophets and Imams, even though on the face of it they cannot be construed as such. However, this impossibility arises from the poor wording of the narrators, afflicted as they were with the habit of freehandedly transmitting what they understood from the narrations instead of the narrations themselves. Generally speaking however, oral traditions on John's asceticism are beyond count. According to them, he would eat grass, wear palm fibers, and weep so much that his face was marked with the flow of tears shed out of reverend fear (*khashyah*) of God.

(19) Qurra said: The sky has never wept for anyone apart from John son of Zachariah and Ḥusayn son of ʿAlī. It cries by turning red.[3]

Author's comment: This purport is also narrated in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. The end of the hadith says: "John's killer was the product of fornication and Ḥusayn's killer was also the product of fornication".

(20) Ibn ʿAbbās said: God revealed to Muḥammad : Verily I avenged John by killing seventy thousand and I will avenge the son of

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* as cited by ʿAbd al-Razzāq; Aḥmad in *al-Zuhd*; ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* as cited by Ahmad; al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in Nawādir al-uṣūl, and al-Ḥakīm and Ibn Mardawayh

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cites Ibn ʿAsākir

your daughter by killing seventy thousand and seventy thousand.[1]

(21) Abū Ḥamza said: I asked [al-Bāqir]: What does what He says about John mean: *And tenderness from Us and an increase?* He replied: [It refers to] God's love. I asked: What was the extent of God's love? He replied: Whenever he said: O, Lord, God, Mighty and Sublime is He, [God] would reply: Here I am! At your service, O John!… [2]

(22) Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā said: Three situations are the most desolate for [human] creation: the day they are born, coming out of their mother's womb and seeing the world, the day they die, seeing the Hereafter and the occupants of the Hereafter and the day they are raised and seeing the laws [that] now governed, which they did not see in the world. God sent a greeting of peace to John in these three places and put his heart at rest by saying: *And peace on him on the day he was born, and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life*. Jesus son of Mary sent a greeting of peace on himself in these three places: *And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life.*[3]

The Story of Zachariah in the Qur'an

God describes him in His words as a Prophet and recipient of revelation. He dubbed him with servanthood (*ʿubūdiyyah*) at the beginning of Sūrah Maryam. In Sūrah al-Anʿām [The Cattle], He named him as one of the Prophets, one of the righteous (*ṣāliḥīn*), one of the chosen (*mujtabīn*), meaning of the select elite (*al- mukhlaṣīn*), and one of the guided ones (*al-mahdiyyīn*).

His Life Story

Nothing is said about his life in the Qur'an apart from his supplication asking for a child, the answer to his supplication, and his being granted John. That was after he had seen what he had seen of Mary's worship and favor in the sight of God.

He refers to his [Zachariah's] fostering Mary because she lost her

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by al-Ḥakīm and Ibn ʿAsākir

2 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration

3 *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* via its chain of narration back to Yāsir al-Khādim.

father Amram. Then, when she grew up, she isolated herself from the people and busied herself with worshiping in a prayer chamber (*miḥrāb*) she had in the mosque. Zachariah would enter to check up on her:… *whenever Zachariah entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found with her food. He said: O Mary! from where does this come to you? She said: It is from God. Surely God gives to whom He pleases without measure* (3:37).

At that point, Zachariah prayed to his Lord, asking Him to grant him good offspring from his wife even though he was a very old man and his wife was barren. His supplication was answered and the Angels called him while he was standing praying in the sanctuary: "O Zachariah! surely God gives you good news of a boy whose name shall be John". He then asked his Lord for a sign to reassure him that the call was from Him . He was told: "Your sign will be that your tongue will be restrained making you only able to communicate with people with sign language for three days". That is how it was—he went out of the prayer niche to his people and signaled to them to glorify morning and evening. God healed his wife for him and she bore him John (vide 3:37–41, 19:2–11, and 21:89–90).

The Qur'an did not say what happened to him or how passed away. However, there are many oral traditions narrated by both Sunnis and Shia stating that his people killed him. His enemies went to kill him but he escaped from them and sought refuge in a tree. It opened up for him and he went right inside it. It then closed up around him. Thereafter, Satan showed the people where he was and told them to use a saw to cut down the tree. They cut it in half and he was killed.

Some oral traditions say that he was killed because the people accused him of being with Mary and making her pregnant with Christ. They said: He alone would visit her regularly. Other accounts are given.

The Story of John in the Qur'an

1. Praise for him

God makes reference to him in a few places and praises him well. He describes John as being confirmer of a Word of God, in reference to his support and confirmation of the Prophethood of Jesus. He was a leader over his people. He was chaste, and did not approach women. He was a Prophet and among the righteous (vide 3:39). He was one of the chosen ones (*mujtabīn*), that is, the select elite (*mukhlaṣīn*). He was of those who are rightly guided (*mahdīyyīn*) (vide 6:85–87). It was God who named

him John (Yaḥyā), made him unique in his name and his person, told him to take hold of the Book with strength, granted him wisdom while yet a child, and sent peace on him the day he was born, the day he died, and the day he will be raised to life. (vide 19:2–15). He praises Zachariah's household saying: *Surely they used to hasten, one with another in deeds of goodness and to call upon Us, hoping and fearing and they were humble before Us* (21:90)

"They" refers to John, his father, and his mother.

2. His Life Story

John was born miraculously to his parents—his father being a very old man and his mother barren. God granted them John when they had given up on having children [through natural means]. He became rightly guided, worshiped God and remained aloof from the material world at an early age. God granted him wisdom when he was still a child. He focused himself solely upon rites of worship, asceticism, complete devotion [to God]. He never married and was not distracted by any of the pleasures of this world (*duniyā*).

He was a contemporary of Jesus son of Mary and believed in his [Jesus'] Prophethood. He was a leader among his people, whose hearts felt tenderness for him and whose souls inclined toward him. People would gather round him, and until [the time] he was martyred, he would warn them, call them to repent and tell them to be God-fearing.

The account of how he was killed does not appear in the Qur'an. The oral traditions say that the Israelite king was seduced by a prostitute. When he visited her, John chastised him and admonished him for this. He was honored by the king who obeyed his commandments and listened to what he said. The woman then harbored enmity for him, and asked the king for John's head and harassed him until he ordered John's death; his throat was cut and his head was presented to her as a gift.

Some oral traditions say that it was the king's niece who asked him for John's head. [Some traditions state that the king] wanted to marry her but John told him not to. Her mother then made her over to captivate the king's heart. She [the mother] sent her a note prompting her to ask for John's head if the king granted her a wish. She did so and so John's throat was cut and his head was placed in a golden bowl and given to her as a gift.

There are many anecdotes about [John's] asceticism, devotion and weeping out of reverend fear (*khashyah*) of God as well as his admonitions and wise sayings.

The Story of Zachariah and John in the Gospels

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The Gospel says (in Luke 1:5–67):

> (5) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. (6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (7) And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. (8) And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, (9) According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. (10) And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. (11) And there appeared unto him an Angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. (13) But the Angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. (14) And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. (15) For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. (16) And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. (17) And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (18) And Zacharias said unto the Angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. (19) And the Angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. (20) And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things

shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. (21) And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. (22) And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. (23) And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. (24) And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, (25) Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. (26) And in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, (27) To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. (28) And the Angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. (29) And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. (30) And the Angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. (31) And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. (32) He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: (33) And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (34) Then said Mary unto the Angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (35) And the Angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (36) And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. (37) For with God nothing shall be impossible. (38) And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the Angel departed from her. (39) And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; (40) And entered into the house of Zacharias, and

saluted Elisabeth. (41) And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. (42) And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. (43) And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (44) For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. (45) And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. (46) And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, (47) And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (48) For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. (49) For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. (50) And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. (51) He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (52) He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. (53) He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. (54) He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; (55) As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. (56) And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. (57) Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. (58) And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. (59) And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. (60) And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. (61) And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. (62) And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. (63) And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all. (64) And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. (65) And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad

throughout all the hill country of Judaea. (66) And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. (67) And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying …

The Gospel also says (in Luke 3:1-21):

(1) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, (2) Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. (3) And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; (4) As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the Prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (5) Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; (6) And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (7) Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (9) And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (10) And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? (11) He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. (12) Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? (13) And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. (14) And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (15) And as the people were in expectation, and

all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; (16) John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: (17) Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. (18) And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. (19) But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, (20) Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. (21) Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized …

The Gospel also says (in Mark 6:17–29):

(17) For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. (18) For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. (19) Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: (20) For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. (21) And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; (22) And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. (23) And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. (24) And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. (25) And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. (26) And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. (27) And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him

in the prison, (28) And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. (29) And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Author's comment: There are other reports about John scattered throughout the Gospels, but these do not go beyond what we have cited. A critical researcher can compare what is cited above to find discrepancies.

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Verses 16-40

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This is a shift from the account of John to that of Jesus. There is a great similarity between the two stories. Both their births were miraculous. Jesus was given rightful guidance and Prophethood when he was still a boy, like John. He gave tidings that he was dutiful to his mother, and that he was neither haughty, nor was he wretched and that peace was on him the day he was born, the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life, just as God said about John. There are other similarities between them. Further, John corroborated what Jesus said and believed in him.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾

(19:16) ***And mention Mary in the Book when she drew aside*** **(intabadhat)** ***from her family to an eastern place.***

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"The Book" means the Qur'an or a chapter (sūrah) because a chapter is a part of the Book. Part of the Book is also scripture. Both possible interpretations mean the same thing, really, and there is little gain in the insistence by some that the second interpretation should be given preponderance and selected.

Nabdh, according to al-Rāghib, means throwing away something worthless, [something] that is not paid any attention to. One says *nabadhahu* when one throws something away thinking little of it and not caring about it. *Intibādh* means keeping away from people and entering into seclusion.

Mary, Amram's daughter, was the Messiah's mother. "Mary" refers to the account of Mary. *Idh* (when) is the adverbial noun of time (*ẓarf*) for the words that follow. The words, *she drew aside* … etc. up to the end of the account are the "contents" of the adverbial noun of time (*maẓrūf*), that is, the account of Mary. This means: "Remember, Muḥammad, in this Book, the account of Mary when she drew aside from her family to an eastern place". It is as if this means, the east of the mosque.

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فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

(19:17) *So she took a veil* (ḥijāban) *(to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man.*

A *ḥijāb* is what covers something and conceals it from others. It was as if she concealed [herself] from her family and cut herself off from them to devote herself to worship, as alluded to by [the verse]:… *whenever Zachariah entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found with her food* (3:37).

This was discussed in the exegesis of the verse [in Eng. vol. 6].

It is said that she would stand in worship in the mosque until she menstruated. She would then stand in worship in Zachariah's house. Then when she became [ritually] pure again, she would go back to the mosque. While she was in an enclosed area of her abode, having put up a screen between her and her family to bathe, Gabriel came in the form of a beardless, well-made young man to visit her, so she sought refuge in God from him.

Author's comment: There is no evidence in support of this detailed account in the wording. The reader already knows that the verse in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān is not free of support for the previous interpretation.

It appears from the context that the subject of "appeared" in [the clause], *then We sent to her Our Spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man*, is the pronoun referring to the Spirit. Hence it was the Spirit sent to her which appeared to her as a well-made man. The meaning of, *fa tamaththala lahā basharan,* is that he [the Spirit] appeared and she saw him as human—in her sight he was manifest in a human form while in essence (*fī nafsihi*) he remained a Spirit and not a human.

If he was not a human or a jinn, he was an Angel in the sense of the third creation described by God in His Book and called *malak* (Angel). He refers to the Angel of revelation in the Qur'an and calls him Gabriel: *Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel—for surely he revealed it to your heart;* calls him a spirit in (2:97): *Say: The holy spirit has revealed it from your Lord* (16:102)*;* and *The faithful spirit has descended with it, upon your heart* (26:193–194); and calls him a Messenger in: *Most surely, it is the Word brought by an honored Messenger* (69:40).

All this supports the interpretation that the "Spirit" sent to her by God was Gabriel.

Applying [the following verses]: *When the Angels said: O Mary, surely God gives you good news with a word from Him (of one) whose name is the*

Messiah, Jesus son of Mary (3:45)*; … She said: My Lord! when shall there be a son (born) to I me, and man has not touched me? He said: Even so, God creates what He pleases; when He has decreed a matter, He only says to it, Be, and it is* (3:47), to the verses under discussion, leaves no doubt that what the Angels said to Mary and their dialogue with her there was the same as what the Spirit says to her here. Reference to Gabriel as the Angels, despite it being in the plural, is like referring to something said by a single person as something said by a group because of the group's sharing the same form, custom or habit. There are many examples in the Qur'an, such as: *They say: If we return to Medina, the mighty will surely drive out the meaner therefrom; and to God belongs the might and to His Messenger and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know* (63:8), and *And when they said: O God! if this is the truth from You, then rain upon us stones from Heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment* (8:32).

Each of these was said by one person.

The Spirit is referred to as God's Spirit out of gratification and to give a sense of greatness. The meaning of the Spirit (*rūḥ*) was discussed [Eng. vol. 25] under the exegesis of: *And they ask you about the soul* (al-rūḥ). *Say: The soul is one of the commands of my Lord, and you are not given aught of knowledge but a little* (17:85).

Some claim, in a weak exegesis, that the spirit referred to in [verse] 19:16 is Jesus, but that the subject of *tamaththala* (there appeared) is Gabriel. The problem with this interpretation is obvious.

An example of poor recitation is *Rūḥannā* instead of *rūḥunā* (Our Spirit). They take *ruḥanna* as being the name of the Angel sent to Mary implying that he is not the same as Gabriel, the faithful Spirit. The problem with this interpretation is also obvious.

Discussion of What *Tamaththala* (Manifested) Means

The concept of *tamaththul*, manifestation in a certain form, appears in many oral traditions. However, in the Book it only appears in the story of Mary. Sūrah Maryam [Mary] says:*… then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared (*fa tamaththala*) to her a well-made man* (19:17).

The subsequent verses in which Gabriel introduces himself to Mary are the best evidence that although he manifested himself to her in human form, he remained an Angel and did not become an actual human being. He only manifested himself in human form and was not human, rather

an Angel. Mary just saw him in a human form.

His manifestation (*tamaththul*) to her and similarly his appearance (*ẓuhūr*) in human form while not actually being in human form means that he was in human form to her senses but in another form beyond the confines of her senses.

This is the literal, dictionary meaning of *tamaththul*. *Tamaththala shayunʾ li-shayinʾ fi sūrah kadhā* means something appeared to another thing in such-and-such a form, that is, it appeared to it in that form without becoming something else. Thus an Angel's appearance (*tamaththul*) in human form means that it appeared to the person seeing him in human form, without the Angel's actually becoming a human.

If the *tamaththul* affects the essence and goes beyond the confine of the witness' perception, it is then of the nature of something becoming something else and transforming into it and not appearing to it as such.

A number of objections are raised to the matter of this manifestation in *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* and elsewhere, including:

1) According to oral traditions, Gabriel had an enormous body. When he became the size of a human body, if the parts of his original body, which are extraneous to the standard human form, fell off, it would mean he would no longer be Gabriel. If these extraneous parts did not fall off, it would mean that they would have to compress and overlap which is impossible.

2) If appearance in another form is possible, certitude is then lifted and definite affirmation fails. One could not be certain that this person whom one sees before oneself is "X" whom one saw the previous day because of the possibility of anyone manifesting in his form.

3) If appearing in human form is possible, it would be possible for something to manifest itself in other forms, for example, flies, other insects and other creatures. Everyone knows that any school of thought which involves itself in such ideas is invalid.

4) If it were possible, all faith in multiple [chains of] narration (*al-khabar al-mutawātir*) would be lost, for example, the [truth that] the Prophet fought at the battle of Badr [would become suspect] because of the possibility that someone in his form [could have] fought [in the Prophet's place].

Response given to the First Objection: Nothing prevents Gabriel from being such that he has essential body parts and extra complimentary body

parts such that he can manifest himself as a human with a subset of his parts. This is based on the opinion that he has a physical body. Based on the opinion that he is non-corporeal, it would not be surprising for him to be able to assume a large form at times and at others a smaller form.

Author's comment: The reader can see that the first of the two halves of the response, just like the objection itself, is based on an interpretation of *tamaththul* as an essential change of the manifested creature such that its original form is discontinued and transformed into another form. However, it was said above that *tamaththul* means appearing in one form while actually remaining in another.

The apparent meaning of the verse on the basis of its context is that when Gabriel appeared, he did not cease to be an Angel and actually became a human. He merely appeared to her in human form to her senses, without taking that form essentially and beyond her senses. This is similar to the noble Angels' coming down in the story of the good news that came to Isaac and their appearing in human form to Abraham and Lot. It is also similar to Satan assuming Surāqa b. Mālik's form at the Battle of Badr. God makes reference to this in [verse] 8:48. Surāqa was in Mecca on that day. There are many examples in the oral traditions, for example:

- Satan's appearance to the polytheists as an old man on the day of the council (*nadwa*) and in the form of Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj the day allegiance was pledged in the mountain pass (*ʿaqaba*) and appearing to John in a strange form;

- The world's appearance to ʿAlī in the form of a beautiful, seductive woman according to the oral tradition;

- The oral tradition about a person's money, children, and deeds appearing to him when he dies; and

- The oral tradition about the appearing of a person's deeds to him in the grave and on the Day of Resurrection.

Similar to this are representations [that appear] in dreams, for example, the enemy [is often] represented as a dog, snake or scorpion, one's husband [is sometimes] represented as a sandal, majesty is represented as a horse; pride is represented as a crown, etc.

As the reader can see, the thing represented in most of these examples has no inherent shape or form and does not transform from one form to another or one shape to another as is the underlying assumption of the above objections. The response to this objection lies in understanding

this nuance.

Response given to the Second Objection: First, it is common between those who believe in a All-Powerful Creator and those who do not. Anyone who acknowledges an omnipotent creator has to admit this because it is possible for Him to create a likeness of someone, named Zayd, for example. Thus confidence is lost and it is impossible to be certain, as per the objection. Similarly, it is possible, according to someone who does not believe in a Creator and attributes events to natural causes and the states of the Heavens, for the causes to produce a likeness of Zayd, so there would still be a problem. Perhaps the rarity of such occurrences means that we can trust ordinary knowledge that is attributed to perception and so it is not necessary to doubt the Zayd we see now being the same Zayd we saw yesterday.

Author's comment: The reader will know better that this response does not eliminate the substance of the problem because conceding a discrepancy between perception and that which is perceived, for example, seeing someone who is not Zayd in Zayd's form, even if it is a rare occurrence, it invalidates perceptual knowledge; leaving no recourse other than to claim that it is just called knowledge because the rarity of discrepancy and error makes a person avert from being doubtful or considering any discrepancy between perception and that which is perceived.

Note, however, that if it is possible for there to be discrepancy and possible for it to occur in each and every instance, there is no way for us to know that it is rare, so where does our knowledge—that something like that is rare—come from?

The truth is that both the objection and rebuttal are fundamentally flawed. The objection is based on the premise that sensory perception is one and the same as the external reality perceived, rather than an image taken of it. As a result this neglects two critical points. The first is the fact that sensory perceptions are definitely real (*badīhī*). The second is that it is only through thought and theoretical knowledge—not through sensory perception itself—that sensory perception can be judged aligned with external reality.

That part of the external reality which is perceived by the senses has some qualities and aspects which resemble it on the whole but cannot be construed as being the external reality itself. Next, observing the experience of using sensory perception shows its limitations. Proof of that are

the kinds of discrepancy between sensorial perception and the external reality, known as errors in perception; for example, perceiving something large to be small, a high object to be low, [something] straight to be crooked, [something] moving to be stationary and vice versa depending on our perspective. The same applies to all the other senses, like when we see a person from afar, who appears to be tiny, and evaluate him to be a human being of the same size as we are, as a result of repeated perception and experience. We perceive the sun to be the size of a dish and to revolve around the earth. However, mathematical proofs tell us that it is *n* times larger than the earth and that it is the earth which revolves around the sun.

Thus, it is evident that what we really perceive is an image within the confines of our senses, as opposed to the external reality as it is. Further, we have no doubt that we really have perceived what we perceived—in our perception. This is what it means [when we say that] perception is definitely real (*badīhī*). As for that which is perceived—that which is external to us and to our senses, the judgment we make of it stems from our thought and theoretical knowledge. As we said above, what we believe to be the state of the external reality is a judgment stemming from thought and theoretical knowledge as opposed to this sensory perception (*ḥiss*). It has become clear in the sciences that study sense and that which is sensed that sensory systems make various adjustments to what they perceive.

Another certainty is that there are reasons outside our very perception that have an effect on our self and cause it to conceive what it conceives. These reasons may be external, for example, bodies whose qualities and forms are exposed to us via our senses. We then perceive images of them via our senses. Next we get to something of its true nature via experience or thought. Alternatively, the reason may be internal, like, for example a strong fear which suddenly descends on a person creating terrible, horrifying images in accordance with painful delusions and notions he has. In all these circumstances, a person may correctly identify the state of the external reality perceived—this is so in the majority of cases. However, he may make an error—like someone who sees a mirage and thinks that it is water or indistinct shapes and thinks that they are people.

It is clear from all of the above that the unavoidable discrepancy between perception and the actual external reality perceived does not mean that one should lose confidence in one's perceptions and that one cannot rely on one's perceptions. Similarly, this confidence should also

apply to the knowledge the human being has acquired by means of experimentation, observation or other; the most reliable of which is what is confirmed by experience.

The response given to the first objection is invalid because it is based on conceding what was conceded in the objection—that sensory perception perceives the external reality itself and that **knowledge** of what is perceived is attributable to the perception itself with discrepancy being rare.

Response given to the Third Objection: In principle, it is possible for an Angel to be perceived in the image of any living being or animal other than a human being. However, we know that this is not the case based on evidence in the oral traditions.

Author's comment: In reality, there is no reliable evidence in the oral traditions to that effect. True, the problem is with the very foundation of the objection. If what we mean by "possibility" (*ʿimkān*) is that we are referring to possibility (*ʿimkān*) versus necessity (*ḍarūrah*) or impossible (*ʿimtināʿ*), then it is obvious that an Angel's ability to assume a human form does not dictate that there should also be the possibility (*ʿimkān*) that they can assume the form of any other animal. On the other hand, if what is meant by possibility (*ʿimkān*) is simply a possibility conceived in the mind (*ʿiḥtimāl ʿaklī*), then one can conceive of whatever they like, until evidence is adduced either proving or disproving it.

Response given to the Fourth Objection: An attempt was made to rebut the fourth objection similar to the one made to the third, saying that it is possible for something reported by a very large number of sources to be wrong. However evidence from oral tradition refutes this.

Author's comment: There is a similar possibility with oral evidence because it is transmitted via one's sense of hearing. The correct rebuttal to this objection is the rebuttal we made to the second objection and God knows best.

It is clear from the above that *tamaththul* means something appearing to a person in a form familiar to him and appropriate to the purpose for which the appearance is made. For example, Gabriel appeared in a well-made, human form to Mary because it is customary to pass messages between people by one person's carrying the message to the recipient and passing the message given to him by speaking and conversing. Similarly, the world appeared to ʿAlī in the form of a beautiful beguiling woman because an exceptionally beautiful young woman—where lust is

concerned—is an effective means of capturing a heart and overcoming the intellect. The same applies to other examples.

Objection: That would mean ascribing to sophistry, because perception behind which there is no reality which conforms to it in every respect is nothing but the delusion of a mirage and vain imagining. Reliance on it is sophistry.

Author's reply: There is a difference between there being a reality which appears in a form familiar to the person perceiving it and which his sensory organs can accept, and, there being nothing but a sensory image behind which there is nothing. Sophistry is the latter, not the former. To wish for more than this through the exclusive medium of acquired knowledge (*ʿilm ḥuṣūlī*) is to wish for the unattainable.

A more comprehensive discussion of this matter can be found in the relevant place. And God is the Guide.

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾

(19:18) ***She said: Surely I fly for refuge from you to the beneficent God, if you*** **(in kunta)** ***are one guarding (against evil)*** **(taqiy)**.

She hastened to speak to him because of the shock of his coming to her. She thought he was a human intruder, come to harm her, so she sought refuge in the Beneficent (*al-Raḥmān*) to benefit from God's all encompassing beneficence. Indeed, this is the goal of all the obedient devotees to God alone who have cut themselves off from all but Him. Her use of the conditional—*if you are one guarding (against evil)*—is either to hold the addressee to a quality he claims for himself or a quality that he holds in himself. Hence, the expression of this conditional judgement becomes leverage over the addressee. Guarding against evil is a fine attribute. It is difficult for a person to deny that he is doing it or admit to not guarding against evil. The whole sentence can be interpreted as something along the lines of, "Verily, I seek the refuge and protection of the Beneficent from you if you are one guarding against evil—you should be one who guards against evil. Your piety should stop you from interfering with me and meaning me harm". The verse is like something addressed to the believers, similar to: … *and be careful of (your duty to) God if you are believers* (5:57);… *and on God should you rely if you are believers* (5:23).

It is possible that the word *in* (if) in *in kunta* (if you are) is a negative

particle meaning, "you are not one who guards against evil because you have invaded my privacy and come in to see me without my permission". However the first of the two interpretations is more in conformity with the context. A third opinion that *taqiy* was the name of either a bad or good man should not be given any weight.

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قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا

(19:19) ***He said: I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I will give you a boy who will grow up properly*** **(zakiyyan).**

This is the Spirit's [Gabriel's] reply to Mary. A short answer is given to make it known that he is not a human as she thought, so that her fear will vanish. Then she will be encouraged by the good news. *Zakiyy* means one who develops properly and grows well.

All of the stories mentioned in this chapter (sūrah) are harmoniously beautiful. God referred to Zachariah and granting him John, [He] referred to Mary and granting her Jesus, [He] referred to Abraham and granting him Isaac and Jacob, and [He] referred to Moses and granting him Aaron.

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قَالَتْ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا

(19:20) ***She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?***

"A mortal touching her" is an allusion to marriage, made the opposite, as it is, to being unchaste in reference to fornication. On its own, "a mortal touching her" could mean either. That is why He contents Himself with just saying: *and no mortal has yet touched me* in the story, as told in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān, to express both cases. The question is rhetorical, that is: "How can I have a child if a man has never associated with me, either lawfully, through marriage, or unlawfully, through fornication".

The context is testimony to the fact that she understood from, *That I will give you a boy who will grow up properly …* that he would give him to her immediately. That is why she said: *and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste*, in repudiation of having ever been married or fornicated in the past.

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قَالَ كَذَٰلِكِ قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ ۖ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا ۚ

وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَقْضِيًّا

(19:21) ***He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy for Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed.***

That is, the Spirit [Gabriel] said. *Kadhālika* (even so) means "as I have described to you". Then he said: *your Lord says: It is easy for Me*. What was said above about the story of Zachariah and John also explains these two sentences.

… and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us: This gives some of the reason for the creation of the Messiah in this miraculous fashion. The phrase is joined with a conjunction to an implied phrase, that is: "We created him by blowing in his soul without a father for such and such a reason, We will make him a sign for the people through his nature and a mercy from Us through his message and the miracles (*āyāt*) at his hands". Implying some of the purpose and joining, with a conjunction, that which is implied to that which is expressly stated, is a commonly used device in the Qur'an, for example:… *and that he might be of those of certitude* (6:75).

There is in this device an allusion to the fact that divine purposes are too great to be comprehended by our understanding or expressed properly by mere words.

… and it is a matter which has been decreed: This is an indication of the inevitability of the matter of this boy who will grow up properly. It cannot be prevented by resistance or prayer.

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا

(19:22) ***So she conceived him; then withdrew herself with him to a remote place.***

The word *qaṣiyy* means remote, that is, she conceived the child, went off on her own, and withdrew herself with him to a place far away from her family.

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَىٰ جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَٰذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسْيًا مَنْسِيًّا

(19:23) ***And the throes (of childbirth) compelled her*** **(fa ajāʾahā)** ***to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten!***

Ijāʾa is the fourth form of *jāʾ*. One says *ajāʾahu* and *jāʾ bihi* to mean the same thing that is, he brought it. In this verse, it is an allusion to compelling and forcing. *Makhāḍ* and *ṭalq* both mean the pains of childbirth. *Jidhʿ al-nakhla* means the trunk of the palm tree. *Nasy* or *nisy* are similar in form to *watr* and *witr* and it means something insignificant that is normally forgotten. This means that when she withdrew herself from her people to a place far away from them, the contractions forced and compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree to give birth to her child.

Reference to it as the trunk of a palm tree, as opposed to simply a palm tree, gives the impression that it was dried out and devoid of its verdure. She said, out of embarrassment on account of her people: "Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been an insignificant thing not paid any attention to and forgotten such that people cannot come upon it as they will come upon me".

فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا

(19:24) ***Then (the child) called out to her from beneath her: Grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you;***

It is apparent from the context that the subject of the verb in, *Then (the child) called out*, refers to Jesus and not to the previously mentioned Spirit. This interpretation is supported by the use of the qualification from beneath her. The qualification fits the newborn in relation to his mother at his birth better than it does the Angel calling out. This interpretation is further supported by the pronouns in the surrounding context that refers to Jesus.

There is a claim that the pronoun refers to the Spirit [Gabriel]. The Spirit being under her is explained by her being on a hillock when she gave birth, the Spirit standing under the hillock and calling out to her from under it. However, there is no evidence in the wording in support of that interpretation.

It is also reasonable to infer that he called out to her chronologically follows, *She said: Oh, would that I …* and that she can only have said these

words at the moment of giving birth or after. He then followed it up with by saying: *Grieve not …*

Grieve not was said to comfort her because of the profound grief and sadness that had descended upon her; there is no calamity that is more hard and bitter for an ascetic, devout woman—especially if she is a virgin—than to be accused of dishonor, especially if she is from a household known both presently and in the past for virtue and purity, and especially if she has no way to defend herself against the accusation and the opponent has evidence against her. That is why he indicated to her not to talk to anyone and he took it upon himself to defend her. That would be incontrovertible proof.

Surely your Lord has made a stream **(sariyyan)** ***to flow beneath you:*** A *sariyy* could mean a body of water or alternatively it could mean a sublime, noble person. The former is more appropriate to the context. The indication of this from the context is, *So eat and drink*, as is obvious.

The alternative claim is that it means the latter and applies to Jesus. The reader will already have realized that the context does not support this. In any event, this sentence, right up to the end of what he says, is [meant] to encourage Mary.

وَهُزِّى إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطْ عَلَيْكِ رُطَبًا جَنِيًّا

(19:25) ***And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates.***

The word *hazz* means to shake violently. It is narrated on the authority of al-Farrāʾ that the Arabs say either *hazzahu*, meaning he shook it or *hazza bihi*, meaning he shook with it. The third form *musāqaṭa* means the same as the fourth form *isqāṭ* and it signifies to make fall or to drop. The subject of the verb *tusāqiṭ* is the palm tree. Reference to shaking the trunk but attributing the dropping to the *nakhla*, meaning the palm tree, also gives the impression that the palm tree was dried and only grew leaves and bore fresh ripe fruit there and then. *Ruṭab* can mean either ripe or unripe dates. *Janī* means that which is picked. *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* says that it is narrated that *janī* is only said of something which has been freshly picked.

فَكُلِى وَاشْرَبِى وَقَرِّى عَيْنًا ۖ

(19:26) ***So eat and drink and refresh the eye.***

The expression *qirār al-ʿayn*, which literally means the settling of the eye, is an allusion to delight. *Aqarr Allāh ʿalayka* means "May God make you happy". Hence the verse means: "So eat the fresh, ripe dates that fall down, drink from the stream which is beneath you and be happy, not sad". Eating and drinking are evidence of happiness and joy. A bereaved person is too distracted to take pleasure in delicious food and refreshing drink because he is preoccupied by his bereavement. Put all together, it means: "Eat of the fresh, ripe dates, drink from the stream and be happy with what God has given you—not sad. As for the people's accusation and interrogation which you fear, keep quiet and do not speak to anyone because I will take care of you".

فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

(19:26) ***Then if you see any mortal, say: Surely I have vowed a fast to the beneficent [God], so I shall not speak to any man today.***

What is meant by fast is a vow of silence, as indicated by what is made logically consequential to that phrase: *so I shall not speak to any man today*. Similarly, it can be inferred from the context that it was something which was customary at that time and would be easily accepted as an excuse for being silent. *Insiyy* is the adjective pertaining to *ins*, the opposite of *jinn*. It means a human being. The *mā* in *fa immā tarayinna*, then if you see, is supplementary (*zā'idah*). The basis of it is "if you see any mortal then say…" In sum, it means: "If you see any mortal and he speaks to you or asks you about the matter of the child then say…" What is intended by "say" is to make understood through sign language. Making understood through sign language can be called "saying". Al-Farrāʾ says that the Arabs call everything that reaches a person kalām, meaning speech, regardless of how it reaches him, provided it was not emphasized by a verbal noun [in this case *kalām*] acting as a corroborative (*tawkīd*). If, however, the verbal noun (that is, *kalām*) is used than that which is communicated is deemed as actual speech (*ḥaqīqaht-ul kalām*).

It would not be unreasonable to infer from, *surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent*, in light of the context, that he asked her to make an intention to fast straight away, vowing it as an undertaking upon herself to God so that she would not be telling them something that was not true.

In any event, *then if you see*, follows on logically from, *and refresh the eye.* Hence, the meaning is: "Do not speak to any mortal. Do not answer anyone who asks you about me. Instead, refer the matter to me and I will spare you the trouble of answering their questions and I will cast away their accusations".

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ ۖ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾

(19:27) ***And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: O Mary! surely you have done a strange thing.***

The two pronouns, that is, in "with him and carrying him" refer to Jesus. The question is rhetorical triggered by what they saw of the shocking state of her affair coupled with her history of asceticism and withdrawal from people, her being Amram's daughter and of the family of Aaron, the Saint. *Fariyy* is an unprecedented serious offence. Alternatively, it is said that it comes from the word *iftirāʾ* which means a lie in allusion to the renounced, repugnant deed. The verse that follows supports the first interpretation. The meaning of the verse is obvious.

يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكِ بَغِيًّا

(19:28) ***O sister of Aaron! your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman.***

Majmaʿ al-bayān says that there are four opinions as to who is meant by Aaron (Hārūn): 1) A good Israelite man to whom every good man is said to be related. Based on this interpretation, "being a sister" means "being like"; "sister of Aaron" means one who is like Aaron. 2) He was her half-brother from the side of her father. 3) It means Aaron, brother of Moses to whom God spoke (*al-Kalīm*). Based on this interpretation, being a sister means "being related to", the same way people say "sister of Tamīm" (*ukht Tamīm*).[1] 4) He was a man notorious for prostitution and immorality.

Baghy refers to a prostitute. The meaning of the verse is obvious.

1 A more familiar example to the readers will be Abū l-Fadl's family relationship to some of the enemies. The enemies referred to him and his brothers as *Bani ukhtina* (sons of our sister). They did not literally means sons of their sister but rather sons of a female member of our tribe or clan. (Trans.)

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾

(19:29) ***But she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who was*** **(man kāna)** ***a child in the cradle*** **(mahd)*?***

Her pointing to him referred them to him [Jesus], to answer them and reveal the truth of the matter. This constituted doing what he had told her when he was born: *Then if you see any mortal, say: Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent, so I shall not speak to any man today*, as discussed above.

A *mahd* is a cot prepared for a baby and in which he is put to sleep. Alternatively it is claimed that in this verse *mahd* means his mother's lap. Alternatively, it is claimed that it means *murabbāt*, that is, a rocking cradle. A further alternative claim is that it is the place he settled on. The underlying assumption for many of these interpretations is that she had not yet made a cradle for him. The truth is, that is the literal meaning of the verse and there is no evidence that she had not yet made a cradle for him at that time. It may be that the people assailed her and spoke to her after she returned home, settled down and made him a cradle or a rocking cradle.

The verse has been challenged on the pretext that use of the word *kāna*, meaning 'was', defeats the purpose because the context dictates that the people should deem speaking to one who is a child in the cradle to be preposterous and not speaking to one who was a child in the cradle before that. Everyone—man or woman—spoken to by people was a child in the cradle at some time before they were spoken to and there is nothing preposterous in that.

The first response to that is that sometimes the past tense refers to the distant past, while [other times] it refers to the recent past just before the present. The wrong meaning is only rendered if the word *kāna* (was) in the verse means the distant past. However, if it is the recent past, just before the present—which is the time when it is proposed that they spoke to him—there is no danger of the wrong meaning being rendered. This explanation is provided by al-Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf*.

Author's reply: Even though the above response refutes the objection, it does not apply to the underlying reason for their refusal to speak to Jesus. They were only refusing to converse with him because he was at present a child in the cradle not because he had a little earlier been a child in the cradle. Thus *kāna* is supplementary.

A second explanation is that the clause, *How should we speak* is giving an account of the past. *Man*, meaning 'who', in *man kāna* is a relative pronoun. Put all together, the meaning is: "How can we speak to those characterized as being in the cradle. We have not spoken to them ever before such that we should speak to this one now". This explanation is also provided by al-Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf*.

Author's reply: Even though more than one person has deemed it to be correct, it is an interpretation which is counter intuitive.

A third explanation offered to clear the objection regarding the use of *kāna* is that *kāna* is supplementary that provides emphasis without any indication as to tense, while *man kāna fī l-mahd,* who was in the cradle, is the inchoative (*mubtadaʾ*) and enunciative (*khabar*) and *sabiyyan* is an emphasized circumstantial qualifier (*ḥāl*).

Author's reply: There is no evidence for this. Furthermore, it is an addition that causes unnecessary confusion, besides which, it is said that *kāna* is a supplement that indicates tense but not the current state.

A fourth explanation is that the word *man*, meaning 'who', in the verse is conditional and *kāna fī l-mahd sabiyyan*, was a child in the cradle, is its condition. *Kayfa nukallimu*, how should we speak, is the consequent clause of the conditional sentence (*jazāʾ al-sharṭ*). Put all together, it means: "Someone who is a child in the cradle cannot be spoken to". The past tense when used in the conditional sentence refers to the future, thus there is no problem.

Author's reply: It is obvious contrivance.

It could be said that *kāna* is not indicative of any tense because the grammatical context of the sentence is that of a condition and its consequent meaning: "Someone who is a child in the cradle cannot be spoken to". Alternatively, it could be said that *kāna* is used to indicate lasting, if not permanent, applicability between the adjective and the noun it describes, as in: *Say: Glory be to my Lord; am I* (hal kuntu) *aught but a mortal messenger?* (17:93)

That is, humanity and Prophethood have materialized in me so I cannot do what a human Prophet cannot do. … *and whoever is slain unjustly, We have indeed given to his heir authority, so let him not exceed the just limits in slaying; surely he* (wa kāna) *is (or was) aided* (17:33).

That is, aid is concomitant to him by Our making the past (*māḍī*) adjective concomitant to the noun.

Thus, the verse at hand means: "How should we speak to a child in the earliest infancy in his cradle who was and will remain an infant for some time". God knows best.

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ﴿٣٠﴾

(19:30) ***He said: Surely I am a servant of God; He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet;***

This is the beginning of his response. He did not address the problem of his birth, about which they continued to pester Mary, because his speaking during his infancy—a miracle—and the truth he told made his position clear. Further, he sends a greeting of peace upon himself at the end of his speech, thereby testifying to his purity and his being clear of any abomination or filth. Part of his purity was the legitimacy of his birth (*ṭahārat mawlidihi*).

He began by saying: *Surely I am a servant of God*; he acknowledged his servitude to God and thereby refuted the extreme beliefs held by those who elevate him above his station and thus he completed the case against them. Similarly, he concludes by saying: *And surely God is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him.*

"He has given me the book" is a tiding of his having been given the Book. The apparent meaning is the Gospel.

The words, *and made me a Prophet* informs of his Prophethood. The difference between being a Prophet and being a Messenger was discussed in the discussion on Prophethood [in Ar. vol. 2] under "The Difference between *Nubuwwah* (Prophethood) and *Risālah* (Messengership)". At that time, he was just a Prophet. Thereafter, God chose him to be a Messenger. The literal meaning of the words is that he had already been given the Book and Prophethood and not that it is a tiding of what was yet to come.

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ﴿٣١﴾

(19:31) ***And He has made me blessed*** **(mubārakan)** ***wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live.***

His being blessed (*mubārak*) wherever he may be means his being the locus of *baraka*. *Baraka* means an increase in goodness. He was truly of benefit to people; he taught them beneficial knowledge, exhorted them to good deeds, gave them a morally enriching education, healed the blind

and lepers, reformed the strong, and helped the weak.

The words, *and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat …* are an allusion to prayer and the *zakat* being made part of his code of religious law. *Ṣalāt* (prayer) is a particular kind of devotion to God and *zakat* is monetary charitable expenditure. This is what Qur'anic custom settled on—always mentioning prayer and the *zakat* together; they are linked together in some twenty places. Accordingly, no attention should be paid to those who say that *zakat* means purification and cleansing of the soul and not charitable giving.

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴿٣٢﴾

(19:32) ***And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed;***

That is: "He has made me affectionate and compassionate with people. Part of that is being dutiful to my mother and I am not haughty and wretched with regard to everyone else". *Jabbār* is someone who makes people put up with whatever he wants but is unwilling to put up with anything from them. It is narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ that *jabbār* means someone who does not give sincere advice and *shaqiyy* is someone who does not take sincere advice.

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

(19:33) ***And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life.***

This is a greeting of peace on himself at the three universal stages which receive him in his being and his existence. It was explained above at the end of the story of John.

Granted, there is a difference between the two greetings. The greeting of peace in the story of John is in the indefinite, which indicates kind, whereas in this story it is additionally augmented with the definite article of kind (*al-*). This further deepens the emphasis on the genus and communicates a broader more encompassing expression of peace. Another difference is that it is God who sends a greeting of peace upon John, whereas it is Jesus who sends a greeting of peace on himself.

ذَٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(19:34) ***Such is Jesus, son of Mary; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute*** **(yamtarūn).**

It is apparent that this verse and the following one [19:35] are expostulatory. The third verse [19:36] is the end of Jesus' speech.

Such is Jesus, son of Mary, is an allusion to the whole story told about him and the explanation of his attributes, that is, that which God mentioned—how he was born, his servanthood to God, his being given the Book, and his being made a Prophet as he described to the people—is Jesus son of Mary.

Qawl al-ḥaqq (the saying of truth) is made accusative by something which is implied, that is, "I say the saying of truth (*aqūl qawl al-ḥaqq*)." The expression, *yamtarūn* in verse 34, means they complain or dispute with each other. This describes Jesus. Together it means: "That is Jesus son of Mary about whom they complain or dispute with each other".

Some have also said that *qawl al-ḥaqq* (the saying of truth) means *kalimat al-ḥaqq* (the word of truth), that is, Jesus, because God called him His Word in: *… and His Word which He communicated to Mary* (4:171);*… gives you good news with a Word from Him* (3:45). *… a Word from God* (3:39).

Based on this interpretation, *qawla al-ḥaqq* is laudative.[1] However, the first interpretation is supported by God's words elsewhere which mean the same:*… the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers* (3:60).

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٣٥﴾

(19:35) ***It is not befitting that God should take to Himself a son! glory be to Him; when He has decreed a matter He only says to it "Be", and it is.***

This is a denial and refutation of the claim by Christians that the Messiah is the "Son of God." The phrase, *when He has decreed a matter He only says to it "Be", and it is,* is proof of the refutation. The word *qaḍā,* meaning decreed, is only used to indicate the impossibility of their claim. That is because one [generally] wants a son for assistance in one's daily affairs yet God has no need for that. He never fails to get what He

1 An adjective expressing or containing praise. (Ed.)

wants—when He has decreed a matter He only says to it, "Be", and it is. Further, a son constitutes part of the father's existence which he sets apart from himself, then gradually raises him until he becomes an individual like him. God has no need for this graduality when achieving His deeds. Nor is there any like Him. Whatever He wants, is, without any delay or transition, and is never like Him. A similar interpretation was presented in the exegesis of: *And they say: God has taken to himself a son. Glory be to Him* (2:116).

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

(19:36) ***And surely God is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him; this is the right path.***

This is joined by the conjunction 'and' to, *Surely I am a servant of God* (19:30). It is part of what Jesus said. Part of the proof of that is the exact same verse appearing in the direct speech quotation of his invitation to his people where his story is told in Sūrah Āl-ʿImrān. Similarly Sūrah al-Zukhruf [The Ornaments of Gold] reads: *Surely God is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him; this is the right path: But parties from among them differed, so woe to those who were unjust because of the chastisement of a painful day* (43:64-65).

Thus there is no reason some exegetes should have thought it possible that the verse starts afresh and is the beginning of something said by God or is something He told the Prophet to say: *And surely God is my Lord and your Lord …* Furthermore, the context does not support either of these two interpretations. Rather, it is part of what Jesus said. He concluded his speech by acknowledging that he has a Lord (*marbūb*) just as he began his speech by testifying to his servanthood to God so as to eradicate the extreme beliefs held by those who elevate him above his station and to complete the case against them.

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

(19:37) ***But parties from among them disagreed with each other, so woe to those who disbelieve, at the scene of a tremendous day.***

The word *aḥzāb* is the plural of *ḥizb*, meaning a group which has a

different opinion from everyone else. *Fa akhtalafa al-aḥzāb* means each *ḥizb* said something different from the others. The only reason the verse says *min baynihim* is because among them were those who remained firmly with the truth. It may be claimed that the word *min* (from) is supplementary and that the part which is fundamental is *ikhtalafa al-aḥzāb baynahum*, parties among them disagreed, but the problem with this interpretation is obvious.

Wayl is a word of threat which means severe punishment. *Mashhad* is a noun of place beginning with the letter *Mīm* and means the witnessing.

Stories about Jesus and the salient points on the disagreements the Christians had over him were discussed in detail in Ar. vol. 3 of this book. (Eng. vol. 6)

أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ يَأْتُونَنَا لَٰكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

(19:38) ***How clearly shall they hear and how clearly shall they see on the day when they come to Us; but the unjust this day are in manifest error.***

The expression *asmiʿ bihim wa abṣir* means: "How clearly shall they hear and how clearly shall they see on the day when they come to Us and return to Us, on the Day of Resurrection? The truth of the matter over which they disagreed will become clear to them". This is as acknowledged by them: *Our Lord! we have seen and we have heard, therefore send us back, we will do good; surely (now) we are certain* (32:12).

The disjunctive in, *but the unjust this day are in manifest error* is to prevent a mistaken belief that if the unjust hear and see on the Day of Resurrection and the truth is revealed to them, they will be rightly guided and be fortunate to attain knowledge and certainty. God disjunctively states that they will not benefit from that or be rightly guided. Instead, the unjust will be in manifest error on that day on account of their unjustness. Judgment Day is a day of requital, not a day to action. On that day they will only find what they had done before and the effect of what they had acquired in their past for their day. All possibility for starting afresh on the Day of Resurrection and acting with the expectation of future reward is no more. In other words, the disposition (*malaka*) for error became embedded in them in this world and, with the advent of death, they are cut off from having any choice. There is nothing left for them but to live

compelled in the error within which they have trapped themselves with no chance of remediation. So the revelation of the truth and the manifestation of reality avails them not.

One exegete says that the verse means that the Prophet is being told to make the people hear and see by explaining that on the day when they are summoned for reckoning and punishment they will be in manifest error. This is an absurd interpretation which does not apply to the verse at all.

وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

(19:39) ***And warn them of the day of intense regret, when the matter shall have been decided; and they are (now) in negligence and they do not believe.***

It is apparent from the context that when the matter shall have been decided explains what the day of intense regret means. There is in it an allusion to the fact that the intense regret will only come to them because the matter will have been destined and decreed. Destiny (*qaḍāʾ*) of the matter only causes intense regret if the person whose matter is decided loses what delights his eye, is his soul's desire, is the core of his happiness, is what he could have achieved for himself and he sees no joy in living without it because of his heart's attachment to it and infatuation with it. Everyone knows that people are not happy to lose something like this even if they have to endure unpleasantness to keep it. Hence, if it does become the case that one fails to achieve this goal, it is just that negligence diverted them from it and so made them remiss with regard to it. That is why He follows up what He says with: *and they are (now) in negligence and they do not believe.* The meaning is, and God knows best: "and make them fear a day on which the matter shall have been decided, such that eternal doom would be inevitable for them. They will be cut off from their eternal happiness in which there would have been the delight for their eyes and they will feel immeasurable, intense regret over it because they were negligent in this world, and did not travel the path that would have directed them and let them go straight to it, that is, believing in God alone and denying that He has any son or partner".

What was said above makes it unnecessary to discuss the various explanations offered by exegetes of this verse. And God is the Guide.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا وَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

(19:40) *Surely We inherit the earth and all those who are on it, and to Us they shall be returned.*

Al-Rāghib says in his *Mufradāt*: *Wirātha* and *irth* means the transfer of property to you from someone else, who is deceased, without a contract or anything in lieu of a contract. One can either say *warithtu mālan ʿan Zayd*, meaning "I inherited money from Zayd" or *warithtu Zaydan*, meaning "I inherited Zayd".

It is as if the verse is a confirmation and a kind of explanation of what He says in the previous verse: *quḍiya al-amr*, the matter shall have been decided. It means: "This decision is simple and easy for Us because We shall inherit the earth and all of you, and, you shall be returned to Us". Inheritance of the earth takes place when they leave it by dying—and so it is left behind for God. As for inheritance from the earth's inhabitants it is through their dying, leaving everything they owned to God . Thus, these two sentences mean the same thing: "We shall inherit the earth from them".

We could interpret the verse more precisely than that—as meaning that God will be the only One who remains after everything comes to an end. He will remain after the earth comes to an end. He will take possession of all that the earth held of its very existence as well as the traces of its existence. He will remain after mankind comes to an end, and take possession of what man used to own—as He said, ownership will be exclusive to Him: *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To God, the One, the Subduer (of all)* (40:16). *And We will inherit of him what he says, and he shall come to Us alone* (19:80).

What this inheritance really means is that everyone returns and is assembled before Him. Thus, *and to Us they shall be returned* is an explanatory phrase joined with a conjunction equivalent to an explanation of the second sentence or to both sentences put together but with attention focused on rational beings as opposed to others, or, on account of everything coming forward as a rational being that day.

This explanation is better than the accusation of repetition concomitant to the first explanation because it is like saying, "I inherited Zayd's property and from Zayd".

Ending the story of Jesus with this verse is not at all inappropriate because God's inheriting is one of the proofs of His not having a son. A father only wants a son as an heir. One who inherits everything has no need for a son.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says on the authority of al-Bāqir that he, that is, Gabriel took the neck of her [Mary's] tunic in his mouth, blew in it and the child was immediately fully grown in her womb, the same way children are normally fully grown in women's wombs after nine months. Thereafter, she exited the bathing area, heavily pregnant. Her aunt then looked at her, dumbfounded. Mary passed in front of her, embarrassed from her aunt and Zachariah. It is said that her pregnancy lasted nine hours.

Author's comment: This is also narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. Some oral traditions say that her pregnancy lasted six months.

(2) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says about (the Words), *Oh, would that I had died before this. …* : She only wished for death as narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq because she could not find among her people a rightly guided one endowed with depth of perception to exalt her person from accusation.

(3) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says regarding, *surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you*: Gabriel stamped his foot and sweet water appeared. Alternatively it is claimed that instead Jesus stamped his foot and a source of running water appeared, as narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir.

(4) The Prophet said regarding (the Words), *surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you*: It is a river.[1]

Author's comment: There is another oral tradition in *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn ᶜUmar on the authority of the Prophet that it means a river which God made flow forth for her to drink from.

(5) *Al-Khiṣāl* says on the authority of ᶜAlī in the narration known as *ḥadīth al-ʾarbaᶜmiʾa*, the narration of the four hundred: A pregnant woman can eat and be remedied by nothing better than fresh dates. God said to Mary: *And shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates: So eat and drink and refresh the eye.*

Author's comment: This interpretation is narrated in a number of oral traditions narrated by Ahl al-Sunna on the authority of the Prophet

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Ṣaghīr* and Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of al-Barāʾ b. ᶜĀzib

and by the Shia on the authority of al-Bāqir.

(6) al-Ṣādiq said: Fasting is not just from food and drink. He then said: Mary said: *Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent,* that is, a vow of silence. [One edition says: "that is, silence".] So if you engage in fasting, guard your tongues, avert your gazes and do not dispute with each other or envy each other.[1]

(7) al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba said: The Prophet sent him to Najran and the people said: Have you not read: "O sister of Aaron" even though they are separated by this [much time] and that [many generations]. So he mentioned this question to the Prophet . So he replied: Did you not tell them that they were named after their Prophets and the pious ones among them?[2]

Author's comment: The hadith is cited in full in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and in an abridged version in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of al-Mughīra on the authority of the Prophet . The hadith means that Aaron, as in "O sister of Aaron" refers to a man named after Aaron the Prophet—Moses' brother. There is no indication in it that he [that is, the man] was pious as some mistakenly believe.

(8) al-Ṣādiq said: *And He has made me blessed wherever I may be,* means of abundant benefit to others.[3]

Author's comment: This is also narrated on the authority of the Prophet . The wording of the hadith is: The Prophet said: Jesus' words, *And He has made me blessed wherever I may be,* mean: He made of me abundant benefit to people wherever I went.[4]

(9) The Prophet said: *And He has made me blessed wherever I may be,* means a teacher and mentor [who teaches good behavior].[5]

(10) Burayd al-Kināsī said: I asked al-Bāqir: Was Jesus son of Mary a commanding proof (*ḥujjah*) from God over the people of his

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1 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration on the authority of Jarrāḥ al-Madāʾinī

2 *Saʿd al-Suʿūd* by Ibn Ṭawūs from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Azdī's book, told by Sammāk b. Ḥarb

3 *Al-Kāfī* and *Maʿānī l-akhbār*

4 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of compilers of hadith collections on the authority of Abū Hurayra

5 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn ʿUdayy and Ibn ʿAsākir on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd

time when he spoke from the cradle? He replied: At that time he was a Prophet and God's commanding proof (*hujjah*) but not yet a Messenger. Did you not hear what He says: *He said: Surely I am a servant of God; He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet; And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live* (19:30–31). I asked: At that time, as he was in the cradle, was he God's *ḥujjah* over Zachariah? He replied: Jesus as he then was, was God's sign and a mercy from God to Mary when he spoke—and spoke on her behalf. He was a Prophet and God's commanding proof over whoever heard what he said at that moment. He then kept silent and did not speak again until he was two years old. Zachariah was then God's commanding proof—Mighty and Sublime is He—for the two years after Jesus fell silent. Then Zachariah passed away and so his son John inherited the Book and Wisdom while yet a young boy. Do you not hear His Words, Mighty and Sublime is He:

(19:12) *O John! take hold of the book with strength, and We granted him wisdom while yet a child*?

Then, when he [Jesus] turned seven, he spoke of Prophethood and being a Messenger when he began to receive revelation. Jesus was then the *ḥujjah*[1] over John and all the people. The world has not been left for a single day, O Abā Khālid, without a commanding proof of God (*ḥujjah*) over the people since the day God created Adam and made him dwell on the earth.[2]

(11) Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā said: I said to al-Riḍā: We used to ask you before you were granted Abū Jaʾfar and you would reply: God will grant me a son. God did grant you one and our eyes were delighted. May God never let us see the day you die but if it does come, to whom [will the divine successorship go]? He then pointed to Abū Jaʾfar who was standing before him. I said: May I be made your sacrifice. This is a boy of three. He replied: That won't do

1 *Ḥujjah* is a term used to describe a person endowed by God with special manifest attributes and a source of guidance to people over whom he has the right of obedience. (Ed.)

2 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration

you any harm. Jesus rose with [the role of] God's commanding proof (*ḥujjah*) when he was a boy of three.[1]

Author's comment: Something similar is said in some other oral traditions.

(12) Muʿāwiya b. Wahb said: I asked al-Ṣādiq what is the best thing by which the servants can get closer to their Lord and which is most beloved to Him, Mighty and Sublime is He and he replied: I know nothing after knowledge (*maʿrifah*) better than this prayer. Do you not see that the pious servant Jesus son of Mary said: *and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakat so long as I live* (19:31)?[2]

(13) *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* says via its chain of narration back to a hadith by al-Ṣādiq: Another example is recalcitrance toward parents because God, Mighty and Sublime is He, says in direct speech attributed to Jesus' in the Qur'an, that someone who is recalcitrant toward his parents is "haughty, wretched": *And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed*.

Author's comment: It is apparent from the oral tradition that he has treated "and He has not made me insolent, unblessed" as a phrase, introduced by a conjunction, explanatory to "And dutiful to my mother".

(14) God's Messenger said: When the people of Heaven enter Heaven and the people of hell enter hell, "O People of Heaven", will be said to them, and they will come out and look around. "O People of hell", will be said to them, and they will come out and look around. Death will be brought like [in the form of] the finest ram. They will be asked: "Do you know death?" They will reply: "This. This [pointing to the ram, is death]" They will all know it. He said: He will come forward and be slaughtered. Then it will be said to them, "O People of Heaven, [you will have] eternity, and no death", and it will be said, "O People of hell, [you will have] eternity, and no death". He said: That is what, *And warn them of the day of intense regret …* means.[3]

(15) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says: Our Companions narrated this on the

1 *ibid*

2 *ibid*

3 *Majmaʿ al-bayān* narrated by Saḥīḥ Muslim via a chain of narration quoting Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.

authority of Abū Jaʾfar (al-Bāqir) and Abū ʿAbdillāh (Jaʾfar al-Ṣādiq). The ending says: Thereafter the people of Heaven will rejoice greatly. If any of them were to die on that day they will die of joy. The people of hell will wail loudly. If any of them were to die [on that day], they will die [out of grief and sorrow].

Author's comment: Words to the same effect are narrated by compilers of hadith collections apart from Muslim, for example, al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nisāʾī, al-Ṭabarī, etc. on the authority of Abū Saʿīd, Abū Hurayra, Ibn Masʿūd, and Ibn ʿAbbās.

(16) *Tafsīr,* al-Qūmmī says, regarding [the Words], *Surely We inherit the earth and all those who are on it*: "Everything created by God is inherited by God on the Day of Resurrection".

Author's comment: This second interpretation is one of the two meanings of the verse discussed above in its exegesis.

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Verses 41-50

The verses refer to a selection from Abraham's story, namely his argument with his father[1] over the matter of the idol worship, an argument based on the innate (*fiṭrī*) guidance and certain knowledge given to him by God, and Abraham's withdrawal from him, his people and their gods. Thereafter, God granted him Isaac and Jacob. He bestowed upon him an eternal word (*kalimah*) in his progeny and made a beautiful remembrance of him and his offspring to remain throughout eternity.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤١﴾

(19:41) ***And mention Abraham in the Book; surely he was a truthful man, a Prophet.***

It is likely that *ṣiddīq* is the hyperbolic form of the noun, meaning someone who is exceptionally truthful—he says what he does and he does what he says without any contradiction between His Words and his deeds. That is the way Abraham was. He ascribed to monotheism (*tawḥīd*) in an idolatrous world even though he was alone and presented arguments to his father and to his people [to dissuade them from idol worship], resisted the king of Babel, smashed the idols, and remained firm in what he said until they threw him into the fire. He then withdrew from them and what they worshiped as he had promised his father from the beginning. Thereafter, God gave him Isaac and Jacob along with all the other gifts recounted by God.

It is claimed that *ṣiddīq* is an hyperbolic noun derived from *taṣdiq* and means someone who often confirms the truth, who confirms it with word and deed. Even though in essence this interpretation conforms with the first interpretation, it is unlikely due to the rarity of hyperbolic nouns [, in this case, *ṣiddīq*,] being derived from morphological verbal forms [, in this case, *taṣdīq*,] other than the first form [, in this case, *ṣadaqa*].

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1 The author later mentions that the person Abraham was addressing when he said, *O my father!…* was not his father but rather his uncle, maternal grandfather or stepfather whom his mother married after his father's death. (Ed.)

The word *nabī*, meaning Prophet, is of the *faʿīl* morphological pattern derived from *nabaʾ*, meaning a tiding. A *nabī* is so-called because he has tidings of the unseen through revelation from God. Alternatively, it is claimed that it is derived from *al-nubuwwa*, meaning sublimity and that a *nabī* is so-called because of the sublimity of his standing.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٤٢﴾

(19:42) ***When he said to his father; O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least.***

The clause, *When he said to his father* is an adverbial noun of time (*ẓarf*) for Abraham (Ibrāhīm). The manner in which the mention (*dhikr*) of Abraham and the mention of his Prophethood is introduced in verses 41 and 42 matches the introduction of Mary in, *and mention Mary in the Book*, as explained in the exegesis of verse 16. As for the claim that it is an adverbial noun of time for "a truthful man" (*ṣiddīqan*) or "a Prophet" (*nabbiyyan*), it is a contrivance unpleasing to good taste.

Abraham alerted his father of two things. First, he told him that the path he was traveling—worshiping idols—was futile and wrong. Second, he asserted that he had knowledge which his father did not have. Abraham's father being in danger of accepting Satan as a guardian, he called his father to follow him so that he could guide him to the path of truth. His Words, *why do you worship what neither hears nor sees* are a rebuke and disavowal of his father's worship of idols. He switched from referring to idols to referring to their characteristics—*what neither hears nor sees*, thus loading the evidence of their futility and powerlessness upon his very reference to them. He proved the particulars of the claim, that is, that worshiping idols is futile and wrong, by [citing] two reasons:

(1) Worship means the worshiper shows subservience to and acts submissively before the object of worship. That can only work if the object of worship has knowledge of this [behavior]. Idols are inanimate representations that have no feelings, cannot hear and cannot see. Worshiping them is futile and has no effect. This is what he is referring to when he says, *what neither hears nor sees.*

(2) A worshiper only worships, prays, and submits his need to something to gain a benefit or prevent harm. The guarantee that this goal can

be fulfilled then depends on the object of worship's ability to do so. Idols cannot do anything so they are of no use in providing benefit or preventing harm to those who worship them. Hence worshiping them is futile and has no effect. This is what he is referring to when he says, *nor does it avail you in the least*.

It was said in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anʿām [The Cattle] that the person Abraham was addressing when he said, *O my father!…* was not his father but rather his uncle, maternal grandfather or stepfather whom his mother married after his father's death. The reader should refer back to that.

The position taken by grammarians is that the letter *tāʾ* at the end of *yā abatī* (O my father!) has been substituted for the first person possessive *yā* (which means "my"). The same applies to *yā ummatī* (O my mother!). This substitution is exclusive to the vocative (*nidāʾ*). Hence, it is incorrect to say, for example, *qāla abatī* to mean 'my father said' or *qālat ummatī* to mean 'my mother said'.

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٤٣﴾

(19:43) ***O my father! truly the knowledge has come to me which has not come to you, therefore follow me, I will guide you on a right path.***

Having explained to his father the futility and invalidity of worshiping idols, implying his father was following the wrong path out of ignorance, Abraham pointed out to him that he had knowledge of this matter which he (his father) did not. Thus his father should follow him to be guided to a straight path (*ṣirāṭan sawiyyan*), a way that is so clear that anyone traveling on it cannot get lost. It is a path of which his father was ignorant. That is why Abraham chose to refer to the path (*ṣirāṭ*) in the indefinite: *I will guide you on a right path* (*ṣirāṭan sawiyyan*) instead of "I will guide you on the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-sawiyy*)". It is as if he is saying: "If you traverse a path, and, it is inevitable that you do so, do not ignorantly traverse this path which is not straight. Rather, follow me—I will guide you to a path that is straight, for I have knowledge of this matter".

There is evidence in the clause, *truly the knowledge has come to me* that he was given knowledge of the truth before he began his Prophetic

invitation and before this discussion with his father has taken place. There is in these words confirmation of what we said with regard to his story in Sūrah al-Anʿām [The Cattle], that is, that he was given knowledge of God and experientially beholding (*mushāhada*) the dominion (*malakūt*) of the Heavens and the earth before he came before his father and his people with his arguments. Guidance in the clause, *I will guide you on a right path* means showing them the way, as opposed to taking them to the destination because the latter is the job of an Imām. At this point he had not yet been made an Imām. This was discussed in detail during the exegesis of the verse: … *He said: Surely I will make you an Imam of men* (2:124).

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ۖ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ عَصِيًّا ﴿٤٤﴾ يَا أَبَتِ
إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾

(19:44-45) ***O my father! serve not Satan, surely Satan is disobedient to the Beneficent. O my father! surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent should afflict you so that you should be a friend of Satan.***

The idolaters believed in the existence of the jinn—Iblīs being one of the jinn—and worshiped idols representative of them. Similarly, they worshiped idols representing Angels and holy people. Notwithstanding, the "worship of Satan" pointed to in the verse is not a reference to the idol worship as practiced by Abraham's people, since there is no reason to restrict the prohibition to idol worship of jinn. Instead, what is meant by worship is obedience, as in: *Did I not charge you, O children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan?* (36:60).

Thus the instruction not to engage in *ʿibāda* of Satan is an instruction not to obey his orders. One of these orders is to have objects of worship other than God.

When he invited his father to follow him to the straight path, he wanted to give him an incentive to follow [him] by rooting him out from his false belief. Accordingly, he alerted him to the fact that worshiping idols was not just futile, without either being of any harm or benefit, but it also puts the worshiper at risk of doom and puts him under Satan's guardianship. Once this happens, the worshiper loses all prospects for goodness and success or hope of peace and happiness. That is because worshiping them—when the One worthy of worship is God, The Merciful to Whom

all mercy (*raḥmah*) is attributed—and currying their favor is only a result of Satan and his enticement. Satan is disobedient to the Beneficent. He [Satan] does not command a thing that is pleasing to Him. He only whispers instructions to do what involves disobeying Him, which will lead to punishment from Him, His wrath, and persistent disobedience, especially with regard to the duties most exclusive to Him, that is, worshiping Him alone. There is in this a risk that the person who is disobedient will be rendered cut off from His beneficence, manifested in guidance toward felicity. The punishment of abandonment (*khidhlān*) will descend on him and God will no longer be his guardian. Instead, Satan will be his master and guardian (*mawlā*) and he will be Satan's bound subordinate (*waliyy*), which is tantamount to destruction and doom. Thus the two verses mean:

"O my father! Do not obey Satan's orders to worship idols because Satan is disobedient—set on disobeying God who is the source of all beneficence (*raḥmah*) and blessing. He (that is, Satan) only commands that which entails disobedience of Him and being deprived of His beneficence. The only reason I tell you not to disobey Him by obeying Satan is because I am afraid that some of the punishment of His forsaking you will follow you and you will be deprived of His beneficence, leaving no one to look after you apart from Satan. You will be a bound subordinate (*waliyy*) of Satan and Satan will be your custodian and master".

The following is clear from the above:

(1) "Worship" *(ʿibāda)* in, *worship not Satan* means worship by way of obedience. The qualification of the worship as being "the worship of Satan" expresses that it inherently takes on the evil associated with Satan.

(2) The reason for substituting the word *al-Raḥmān,* meaning the Beneficent, for the word *Allah*, termed in Arabic as the word of Majesty, or *lafẓ al-jalāla*, in two places is because absolute beneficence (*raḥmah*) has an effect on the two predicates. In the first place, His being the source of all beneficence (*raḥmah*) and blessing (*niʿmah*) makes it despicable to persist in disobeying Him and makes it right to tell people not to obey the one who insists on disobeying Him. Secondly, His being the source of all beneficence is the incentive to fear His punishment which follows from His beneficence being withheld, letting divine retribution (*naqmah*) and individual wretchedness (*shaqwah*) take over.

(3) The punishment (*ʿadhāb*), in verse 45, means abandonment (*khidhlān*) or the equivalently the withholding of beneficence (*raḥmah*)

as if to leave a person to his own devices. The context does not support the claim made by some exegetes that it means punishment in the Hereafter.

قَالَ أَرَاغِبٌ أَنْتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ۖ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾

(19:46) ***He said: Do you dislike*** **(ʾa rāghibun ʾanta ʿan)** ***my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist*** **(laʾin lam tantahī)** ***I will certainly revile*** **(la ʾarjumannaka)** ***you, and leave me*** **(wa-hjurnī)** ***for a time*** **(maliyyan).**

According to *Majmaʿ al-bayān, raghiba ʿan* something means to dislike it and is the opposite of *raghiba fī* something which means to desire it. *Intihāʾ* means desisting from doing something after being told not to do it. *Rajm* means stoning and usually signifies stoning to death. *Hajr* means leaving and separation. *Maliyy* means a long period time. The verse relates a threat to Abraham to kill him in the most ignominious and humiliating way, that is, stoning, which is the method used to put to death those who have been cast out. It also refers to Azar's casting Abraham out.

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ ۖ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾

(19:47) ***He said: Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever affectionate*** **(ḥafiyy)** ***to me.***

According to al-Raghib, *ḥafiyy* means one who is dutiful and kind, who attends to the tiniest needs of others with goodness and sees to [each need] one after the other. It conjugates as follows: (third person singular perfect) *ḥafa*; (third person singular present) *yaḥfu*; (gerund) *ḥafyun* or *ḥafwa*. *Iḥfāʾ* means asking, but *iḥfāʾ fīhi* means insistence with regard to something or applying oneself assiduously to something.

Abraham reciprocated his father's bad behavior and threats that threatened his safety by invoking peace on him; this entails beneficence and giving assurance. He promised to pray to his Lord to forgive him, and to withdraw from his people and from what they called on instead of God, as per his father's request to leave him alone for a long time.

Peace is the way of the noble-minded. He confronted his father's ignorance—when he threatened to stone him and cast him out because of a true word which he had spoken. As He says: … *and when they pass by*

what is vain, they pass by nobly (25:72); *… and when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace* (25:63).

Some exegetes have said that "peace" is a farewell, said upon leaving and departing, pursuant to his father's saying: *and leave me for a time*. However, he withdrew from him and his people after a period of time which was not short.

As for his seeking forgiveness for his father, even though he was a polytheist, the apparent meaning of: O my father! surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent should afflict you so that you should be a friend of Satan is that he was not certain at that time that his father was a friend of Satan—that is, that polytheism was imprinted on his heart and that he stubbornly rejected the truth and was an enemy of God . If he had been certain, he would not have said something like, *surely I fear*. Rather, he thought that it was possible that he was ignorant and weak and that if the truth became clear to him he would follow it.

In fact, it is possible that divine mercy can apply to the likes of Abraham's father as He says: *Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not in their power the means nor can they find a way (to escape); So these, it may be, God will pardon them, and God is Pardoning, Forgiving* (4:98-99).

He sought to soften the heart of his father by promising to seek forgiveness for him. He did not claim that forgiveness was inevitable for him. Rather he showed hope of that as evidenced by, *surely He is ever affectionate to me* and *… but not in what Abraham said to his father: I would certainly ask forgiveness for you, and I do not control for you aught from God …* (60:4)

This interpretation is supported by: *It is not (fit) for the Prophet and those who believe that they should ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even though they should be near relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are inmates of the flaming fire. And Abraham asking forgiveness for his father was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he declared himself to be clear of him; most surely Abraham was very tender-hearted forbearing* (9:113-114).

Abraham's disassociating himself from him after his enmity became apparent is evidence of the fact that before that—at the time when he made the promise—he hoped that his father would not be an enemy of God even

though he was a polytheist. That could apply to none other than someone who is ignorant but not one who is set on opposing the truth (*muʿānid*). This view is further supported by His words: *O you who believe! do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love … God does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely God loves those who do justice* (60:1-8).

Claim: His praying for forgiveness for his father even though he was a polytheist was because he promised to pray for him and did so, as reason dictates. Reason does not deny the permissibility of doing so. It is only textual evidence that forbids it. It is not proven that it was unlawful under the religious law at that time. Then, when it was made unlawful, he disassociated himself from him.

Reply: This interpretation is incompatible with the verses of the Qur'anic story, as is obvious upon reflection on the above discussion

Claim: His praying for forgiveness for him was conditional upon his father's repenting and becoming a believer.

Reply: The problem with this interpretation is obvious.

Claim: *I will pray to my Lord to forgive you* means: "I will pray to God not to punish you in this world".

Reply: Like the above, this is a particularization of the meaning without evidence for it.

Claim: By promising to pray for the forgiveness of his father, he was necessarily also praying for the prerequisites to his father's forgiveness. Since the prerequisite for forgiveness is repentance, he was therefore promising to pray for his forgiveness as well as his repentance. It is as if he said: "I will ask God to forgive you. I will ask Him to grant you the success to repent and guide you to become a believer so that He will forgive you". Asking for forgiveness could be interpreted as a metonymy for asking for the success to repent and be guided to faith.

Reply: Even though this is the best of all the alternative explanations it is still far-fetched. The words in the verse hold an entreaty to soften the heart of his father and render him responsive to his call. For this end, it is more appropriate to petition for his forgiveness rather than to petition for his success and guidance. The reader should give this some careful thought.

His supplication for his father is similar to his supplication for the

polytheists generally, as in: … *and save me and my sons from worshiping idols: My Lord! surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, You surely are Forgiving, Merciful* (14:35-36).

وَأَعْتَزِلُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُو رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَّا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾

(19:48) ***And I will withdraw from you and what you call on besides God, and I will call upon my Lord; maybe I shall not remain unblessed in calling upon my Lord.***

This is a promise [from Abraham] to withdraw from his people and keep his distance from them and from their idols, to be alone with his Lord and make his prayer to God, sincere in the hope that he will not be unblessed even after his continued prayers. The only reason he was hopeful, and not certain, about the outcome of his prayers and supplications was because these causes—prayer, devotion to God, and so on are not causes which make anything incumbent upon God. On the contrary, rewarding, making others happy, and so on are a favor from Him alone. Furthermore, ultimately all things are known by their final outcomes and no one but God knows the unseen. A believer always has to steer between fear and hope.

فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾

(19:49) ***So when he withdrew from them and what they worshiped besides God, We gave to him Isaac and Jacob, and each one of them We made a Prophet.***

The reason only Isaac is mentioned [among his two sons] may be that the intent is contingent upon mentioning Prophetic succession in the Israelite family tree. That is why Jacob is mentioned after Isaac—there are a large number of Prophets in his line. It is also supported by, … *and each one of them We made a Prophet.*

As for, *And We granted to them of Our mercy* (19:50), it is possible that this means Imamate, as in: *And We gave him Isaac and Jacob, a son's*

son, and We made (them) all good. And We made them Imams who guided (people) by Our command … (21:72-73) or support by the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*) as in: *… and We revealed to them the doing of good* (21:73), as will be presented in the exposition of Sūrah al-ʿAnbiyāʾ.

Alternatively, it could mean general divine guardianship (*muṭlaq al-wilāyah al-ʾilāhiyyah*).

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وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٠﴾

(19:50) ***And We granted to them of Our mercy, and We left (behind them) a truthful mention*** **(lisān a ṣidqin)** ***of eminence*** **(ʿaliyyan)** ***for them.***

According to exegetes, the word *lisān* can mean either laudatory or disparaging mention among the people. When annexed to *ṣidq* which means truthfulness, it is beautiful praise devoid of lies. *ʿAliyy* means high in rank and quality, distinguished. Together it means: "We made for them beautiful, truthful and highly distinguished praise".

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Verses 51-57

In this section, there is reference to a number of other Prophets and some of the divine mercy (*raḥmah*) which God bestowed upon them. These Prophets are Moses, Aaron, Ishmael, and Enoch.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَىٰ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥١﴾

(19:51) ***And mention Moses in the Book; surely he was made devoted* (mukhlaṣ)*, and he was a messenger, a Prophet.***

The meaning of the word *mukhlaṣ* (translated here as "devoted") as was discussed above, is one [who is] rendered by God to be exclusively for Him. In a servant that is *mukhlaṣ*, there is no share in himself or in his deeds for anyone other than God. It is the highest level of servitude. The difference between a Messenger and a Prophet was also discussed [in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah].

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا ﴿٥٢﴾

(19:52) ***And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw nigh, holding communion.***

The word *ʿayman*, meaning the right direction, is an adjective describing the noun *jānib*, meaning side, in allusion to the right side of the mountain. *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says that *najiyy* in the sense of *munājī* means someone with whom one speaks in confidence. It is like the participles *jalīs,* meaning someone with whom one sits or *ḍajīʿ*, meaning someone next to whom one lies down.

It is apparent that drawing him nigh is figurative, even though this divine gift was in a place, namely the blessed side of the mountain where Moses was spoken to. A way of explaining this is like a master calling his humble servant and drawing him close to where he is sitting, making him a confidant to speak to him in confidence such that he can then receive what others have no way of receiving.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٣﴾

(19:53) ***And We gave to him out of Our mercy his brother Aaron a Prophet.***

This is an allusion to the answer given to Moses' supplication when revelation was given to him the first time on the mountain and he said: *And give to me a helper from my family: Aaron, my brother, Strengthen my back by him, And associate him (with me) in my affair* (20:29-32).

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٤﴾

(19:54) ***And mention Ishmael in the Book; surely he was truthful in (his) promise, and he was a messenger, a Prophet.***

Exegetes disagree over which Ishmael is meant here. The majority claim that it means Ishmael son of Abraham, Friend of the Merciful. The reason he is singled out for mention and not mentioned alongside Isaac and Jacob is on account of his status. Alternatively, it is claimed that someone else is meant, that is, Ishmael son of Ezekiel, one of the Israelite Prophets. If Ishmael son of Abraham had been intended, he would have been mentioned alongside Isaac and Jacob.

The claim made by the majority—that he is singled out for mention on account of his status—is weakened by the fact that if that were the case, it would have been more appropriate to mention him after Abraham and before Moses, not after Moses.

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿٥٥﴾

(19:55) ***And he enjoined on his family prayer and almsgiving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased.***

His *ahl* means his closest relations from his offspring, clan, and people as per the literal meaning of the word. An alternative claim is that *ahl* means his nation. However there is no evidence in support of this claim.

Claim (by some exegetes): Being, *one in whom his Lord was well pleased* means well pleased in him but not in his deeds.

Reply: The qualification of being one in whom his Lord was well pleased is not followed with any further qualification or restriction. Instead, it is left broad and open and it is not restricted to being by virtue of one aspect without another. Hence, there is no evidence to exclude his deeds as a factor that contributed to making him pleasing to His Lord

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٦﴾

(19:56) ***And mention Enoch [Idrīs] in the Book; surely he was a truthful man, a Prophet.***

Exegetes have claimed that he (Idrīs) was the Prophet called Enoch, one of Noah's ancestors referred to in Genesis. He became known as *Idrīs* by virtue of his abundant devotion to study (*dars*).

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٧﴾

(19:57) ***And We raised him to a high place.***

It may be possible to infer from the context of the stories told in the sūrah which recount the multiple gifts of Prophethood and guardianship which are spiritual divine stations that a high place to which he was raised was one of the levels of divine proximity. There would be nothing special about being physically raised and ascending to the very edge of the atmosphere no matter where it is.

It is claimed—according to hadith—that it means that God raised him to some of the Heavens and held him there; this is a manifestation of a miraculous sign and extreme divine power. Indeed, it is sufficient as an honor.

The Story of Ishmael, Truthful in his Promise

Based on one of the two previous interpretations, the story of Ishmael son of Ezekiel the Prophet only appears in these two verses [19:54-55] in the Qur'an. God praises him highly and deems him to be truthful in his promise, one who enjoins what is right and one in whom his Lord is well pleased. It says that he was a Messenger Prophet.

As for oral tradition, it is narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq: Ishmael about whom God says in His Book: *And mention Ishmael in the Book; surely he was truthful in (his) promise, and he was a messenger, a Prophet* was not Ishmael son of Abraham. On the contrary, he was one of the Prophets sent by God, Mighty and Sublime is He, to his people. They took him, scalped him and skinned his face. An Angel then came to him and said: Verily, God, sublime is His splendor, has sent me to you so tell me to do what you want. He replied: I have a good example and sufficient

consolation in the Prophets and what has been done to them.[1]

Words to the same effect are narrated in *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*, in a chain of narration back to Abī Baṣīr on his authority. The end of the oral tradition says: I have a good example to follow in al-Ḥusayn.

Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā asked: Do you know why Ishmael was called "truthful in his promise"? [Sulāyman] replied: I do not know. He said: He made a promise to a man and sat waiting for him for a year.[2]

Words to this effect are narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq.[3] *Majmaʿ al-bayān* narrates the same without citing the chain of narration back to him.

Tafsīr, Al-Qummī says about, *And mention Ishmael in the Book; surely he was truthful in (his) promise, and he was a messenger, a Prophet*: "He made a promise and waited for his companion for a whole year. He was Ishmael son of [Prophet] Ezekiel".

Author's comment: His promise—to stay in one place, waiting for his companion—was not fixing the duration of his waiting time "for an hour" or "for a day" or anything like that. Nevertheless, truthfulness was so important to him that he was bound to keep his unqualified promise and remain in the place where he had promised his companion he would stay until he came back to him.

The virtue of delivering one's promises, like all psychological attributes such as love, will, resolve, belief, reliance on God, and submission to Him, are commensurate with the level of one's knowledge and certitude. For example, belief which is mixed with any error and sin is the lowest level of belief. Conversely, belief can continue to grow and become purer until it is free of all latent forms of associating partners to God, and until it causes the heart to detach from everything apart from God or does not even take notice of anyone else. At that point, this is the highest level of belief.

There are also levels of keeping one's promises. Consider having made a promise to wait for a friend without having specified the waiting time.

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1 *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ* via its chain of narration back to Ibn Abī ʿUmayr and Muḥammad b. Sinān on the authority of someone

2 *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* al-Riḍā says via a chain of narration back to Sulāyman al-Jaʿfarī

3 *al-Kāfī* on the authority of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr on the authority of Manṣūr b. Ḥāzim

One level of keeping one's promise is waiting an hour or two until another matter arises that dictates one's departure. This is what current societal norms deem as loyalty. A higher level is staying in the same place until one's friend returns, waiting at most until nightfall or the like, considering that to be the maximum reasonable waiting time. Higher still is sticking to the literal meaning of the unqualified promise and staying, no matter how long. Strong souls that watch what they say and do, do not say anything unless it is within their power to keep their word, by doing as they say. Then, once they have uttered the words, nothing diverts them from keeping it and carrying out what they have resolved upon.

An oral tradition says that the Prophet promised to wait for one of his Companions in Mecca by the Kaaba until he returned to him. The man went off on his business and forgot about the matter. He remained there for three days waiting for him. Someone saw him and told the man about it. He then came and apologized to him. This is the level of the quintessentially truthful (*ṣiddīqīn*). They never say they will do something and then fail to do so.

The Story of the Prophet Enoch (Idrīs)

(1) He is not mentioned anywhere else in the Qur'an apart from the following two sūrahs and verses: *And mention Enoch [Idrīs] in the Book; surely he was a truthful man, a Prophet, And We raised him to a high place* (19:56-57), and *And Ishmael and Enoch [Idrīs] and Ezekiel [Dhū l-Kifl]; all were of the patient ones; And We caused them to enter into Our mercy, surely they were of the good ones* (21:85-86).

There is high praise for him by Him in these verses—He refers to him as a Prophet, a man of truthfulness, one of the patient and good ones and says that He raised him to a high place.

(2) One of the oral traditions telling his story is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir.[1] It is a long hadith, an abridged version of which states that when Enoch[2] was commissioned to Prophethood, it was during the reign

1 *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Niʿma* via its chain of narration on the authority of Ibrāhīm b. Abī l-Bilād on the authority of his father.

2 The editorial team have decided to use the Eng. name for Idrīs assuming that the claim that he was the Prophet called Enoch, one of Noah's ancestors as referred to in Genesis, is correct. (Ed.)

of a tyrannical king. One day he set out on a trip away from the city and passed by a farmland which pleased him and he wanted to own it. The land belonged to a servant who was a believer. The king then had him summoned and bargained with him, seeking to buy it from him. However he would not sell it and refused to do so. The king then returned to the town, sad and perplexed over what to do, so he sought the counsel of a wife of his, whose counsel he normally sought in important matters. She advised him to have witnesses testify that he had left the king's religion, to kill him and take possession [of it]. He did as she advised and seized the land.

Thereafter, God revealed to Enoch to go to the king and relay the following to him:

"Are you not content with wrongfully killing My believing servant to take his land for yourself, making his children needy and hungry through his death? Lo! By My Power I will avenge him in the long run, I will seize your kingdom from you swiftly, I will bring chaos to your city, I will subjugate your might and I will feed the dogs your wife's flesh. O you who is under my trial, My Clemency has deluded you".

So Enoch took him God's message and conveyed it to him before a crowd of his companions. Offended by the letter, the king expelled Enoch from his court and then sent people to kill him as advised by his wife. Some of Enoch's companions became aware of that and advised him to flee. He left that very day with some of his companions.

He then spoke to his Lord in confidence and complained to Him about what he had experienced at the hands of the king, after he took His message to him. Then, God revealed to him to leave the township and that He would execute His plan for the king and do as He had said. Enoch asked that the sky not rain upon the township and its environs until he was asked to pray for rain. His supplication was answered.

Thereafter Enoch told his companions, who were believers, about it, and told them to also leave the township. They did so and dispersed through the lands. There were twenty of them.

News of his revelation and departure spread among the people. He departed and headed for a cave in a high mountain to worship God; he fasted by the day and an Angel brought him food with which to break his fast every evening.

God did to the king, his wife and his city as He had revealed to Enoch and another disobedient tyrant appeared in the city. The sky withheld

rain from them for twenty years until the people became exhausted and their condition became serious. When the exhaustion became too much for them, some of them reminded each other that the only reason they were facing what they were experiencing, was because of Enoch's supplication against them not to have any rain until he would be asked for it and because of Enoch's expulsion from the city. Yet now they did not know where he was!

The consensus [of the townspeople] was to turn back and repent to God, and ask Him for rain because He was more Merciful toward them than Enoch. They came together to supplicate and plead before God.

Thereafter, God revealed to Enoch: "The people have cried out to Me in repentance, praying for forgiveness, sobbing and beseeching [Me]. I have had mercy on them and nothing is stopping Me from raining down on them apart from your request—your asking Me not to cause the sky to rain on them until you ask Me. Ask Me to help them". Enoch replied: "O God! Verily I do not ask that of You".

God then revealed to the Angel who used to bring food to Enoch to hold back; he did so for three days until Enoch was gripped by the pangs of hunger. He then called out: "O God! You have withheld my provision before taking my soul". God then revealed to him: "Enoch, you have become desolate over my withholding your food for three days but not over the hunger of the people of your township and their exhaustion over the past twenty years. I asked you to ask Me to bring rain to them but you were held back and did not ask Me, so I disciplined you with hunger. Go down from your place and earn your own living. Now, I'm leaving you to your own devices".

Enoch then went down there to the township and looked at a house from which smoke was rising. He rushed to it and lo and behold a very old woman was serving two circular loaves of [bread] on a frying pan and so he asked her to give him one to eat because hunger had worn him out. She replied: "Servant of God, Enoch's supplication has not left us any surplus to give anyone [anything] to eat". She swore that she did not own anything else apart from it. "So ask one of the other people of this township for something to eat". He said to her: "Give me something to eat to hold my soul together and to give my feet the strength to go and beg". She replied: "There are just two loaves, one for me and the other for my son. If I give my share to you, I will die and if I give you my son's share

to you, he will die. There is no surplus here. He said: "Your son is small. Half a loaf is enough for him. Give us each half and it will suffice us". She agreed and did so.

When Enoch saw her son eat from his loaf, he convulsed out of anxiety and died. His mother said: "Servant of God, you have killed my son through anxiety over his share". He replied: "Do not be alarmed, for I will resurrect him for you straight away with God's permission". He took the boy by the upper arm and said: "O, soul which has left his body, by God's command and with His permission return to his body, I am Enoch the Prophet". The boy's soul then came back to him.

When his mother heard Enoch speak, specifically his words: "I am Enoch", and she looked at her resurrected son, she said: "I testify that you are Enoch the Prophet". She went out calling at the top of her voice in the township: "Rejoice over relief. For Enoch has entered your township". Enoch proceeded until he sat down on the site of the first tyrant's city which had turned into a pile of dust. People from his township gathered around him, begged him for mercy and asked him to pray for rain for them. He replied: "Not until this tyrant of yours comes along with all the inhabitants of your township, walking barefoot to ask me that".

News of that reached the tyrant and he sent forty men to Enoch, commanding them to bring Enoch to him. When they came and told him to go with them he prayed against them and every last one of them died. The tyrant then despatched five hundred more men. When they came to him, they told him to go and begged him for mercy. Enoch showed them where their companions lay dead and said: "I will not go to him and not ask until he and all the inhabitants of this township come walking barefoot to me and ask me to pray for rain". They then set off for the tyrant, told him what Enoch had said and asked him, along with all the inhabitants of the township to walk barefoot to him and ask him to ask God for the sky to rain on them. Thereafter they went to him, stood before him, submissive and humble and asked him to ask God for the sky to rain on them.

Thereupon, Enoch prayed for the sky to rain on them and a cloud in the sky passed over them. There was thunder and lightning, and it poured [rain] upon them that very instant until they thought that it was a flood. They did not return to their homes until their new anxiety was on account of the water.

al-Ṣādiq said in a hadith referring to the mosque of al-Sahla: Do you

not know that it is where Enoch the Prophet's house was, where he used to sew.[1]

Many biographers and historians say that he was the first person to write with a pen and the first person to sew.

Tafsīr, Al-Qummī says: He was called Enoch (Idrīs*)* on account of his abundant study (*dars*) of books.

Some oral traditions say that (the verse), *And We raised him to a high place* means: God was angry with one of the Angels and so He cut his wing and cast him onto one of the islands in the sea. He then remained there as long as God willed. Thereafter, when God dispatched Enoch, he came to that Angel. He asked him to pray to God to be pleased with him and give him his wing back. Enoch then prayed to Him and God gave his wing back and was pleased with him. The Angel said to Enoch: Do you need anything? He replied: Yes. I want you to raise me up to Heaven so that I can look at the Angel of death. I cannot find enjoyment in this world as long as I am mindful of him. The Angel then took him on his wing until he let him reach the fourth Heaven. Lo and behold, the Angel of death was shaking his head in astonishment. Enoch greeted him and asked him: "What's wrong? Why are you shaking your head?" He [the Angel of death] replied: "Verily, The Lord of Might has commanded me to take your soul between the fourth and fifth Heavens. I asked, 'Lord, how can that be when there are four Heavens between me and him —and the thickness of every Heaven is the distance it takes five hundred years to travel— and between every two Heavens lies five hundred years of travel?'" He then took his soul between the fourth and fifth Heavens. That is what, *And We raised him to a high place* means.[2]

Something to the same effect is narrated on the authority of the Prophet.[3]

Besides the weakness in the chain of transmission (*sanad*) of both

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1 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration on the authority of ʿAbdallāh b. Abān

2 ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī narrates the hadith in his exegesis on the authority of his father on the authority of Ibn Abī ʿUmayr on the authority of someone he narrated from on the authority of Abu Jaʾfar

3 *al-Kāfī* on the authority of ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm on the authority of his father on the authority of ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān on the authority of Mufaḍḍal b. Ṣāliḥ on the authority of Jābir on the authority of Abu Jaʾfar

narrations, especially the second one[1] it is impossible to rely on them because they contradict the literal meaning of the Book, which clearly states that Angels are infallible and that they are innocent of all sin and error.

Summarizing what Ibn ʿAbbās and others have said: Enoch traveled one day and was afflicted with sunstroke so he said: "I have walked in the sun for just one day and hurt myself. What is it like for the one who in a single day carries the sun a distance it would take five hundred years to travel? O God, lighten his burden and take its heat away from him". God answered his supplication and the Angel who was carrying the sun felt it. He then asked God about it and so He told him about Enoch's supplication and His answer to it. He then asked Him to bring him and Enoch together and make an intimate friendship between the two of them. He granted him permission.

Thereafter, Enoch would ask him things, one of which was: "You have said that you are the dearest Angel to the Angel of death and the most able to influence him; intercede on my behalf for him to put off my death so that I can give more thanks and worship more". The Angel replied: "God does not put off [the death of] a soul when its time comes". He said: "True, but this is preferable for me". The Angel replied: "I will speak to him for you. Whatever he can to do for any of the children of Adam, he will do for you".

The Angel then carried him to Heavens on his wing and placed him where the sun rises. He then went to the Angel of death, told him what Enoch needed and interceded on Enoch's behalf. The Angel of death replied: "That is not up to me. However, if you like, I will tell him when he will die". He said: "Yes". Thereafter, he [the Angel of death] looked in his record, he [the other Angel] told him his name and he [the Angel of death] said: "I do not see his ever dying except that I find him dying where the sun rises!" The other Angel said: I came to you and left him there. The Angel of death said to him: "Go forth, because for you will only find him dead. I swear by God, nothing remains of his appointed time". The Angel returned to him [Enoch] and found him dead.[2]

This is also narrated on the authority of Kaʿb, except that it says that

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1 Because of Mufaḍḍal b. Ṣāliḥ who was a liar who fabricated hadith.

2 Narrated by al-Thaʿlabī in *al-ʿArāʾis*

the Angel that tried to intercede for Enoch was the Angel who would carry up his deeds. He would take up deeds equivalent to everyone else on earth in his time. Being impressed by this, the Angel asked God if he could descend to him. He was granted permission so he descended to him and kept him company … etc. Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates this hadith via another chain of narration on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, saying that Enoch died between the wings of the Angel.[1]

It is narrated that the Prophet said: deeds equal to those of the entire population of the world would be taken up for Enoch. That Angel was amazed by it so he asked God for permission to descend to earth and keep him company. God granted him permission so he descended to earth and kept him company. They traveled around the world, worshiping God. Enoch was amazed by what he saw of his companion's worship, [who showed no] laziness or languor. He then asked him about it and kept on asking him until the Angel of death introduced himself and told him the story of his descent and his keeping him company. When Enoch found out, he asked him to grant three wishes:

(i) To take his soul that very instant and not return it to him—he sought God's permission and did so;

(ii) To lift him up to Heaven and show him hell—he sought permission and did so; and

(iii) To show him Heaven—he sought permission and did so.

He entered Heaven, ate of its fruits and drank of its water. The Angel of death then told him: Leave, Prophet of God, for you have what you wanted. He refused to leave, clinging to a tree therein. He challenged the Angel, saying: God has said: *Every soul shall taste of death* (3:185; 21:35; 29:57). I have tasted it. He has also said: *And there is not one of you but shall come to it* (19:71). I have come to hell. He has said: *nor shall they be ever ejected from it.* (15:48) I cannot leave Heaven after having entered it.

Thereafter, God revealed to the Angel of death: My servant has overcome you with his argumentation so leave him be. So He remained in Heaven.[2]

Al-ʿArāʾis narrates the same on the authority of Wahb but says at

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn Abī Shayba and Ibn Abī Ḥātim on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn al-Mundhir on the authority of Ghufra's freeman ʿUmar via a broken chain of narration

the end: So he is alive there, worshiping God in the fourth Heaven one moment and enjoying comfort in Heaven the other.

Al-Ḥakīm's *al-Mustadrak ʿalā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* says on the authority of Samura: Enoch was white, tall, large and broad-chested. He had little body hair and a lot of hair on his head. One of his eyes was bigger than the other. He had a non-leprous white spot on his chest. When God saw what he saw of the people of earth's wrongdoing and transgression of God's commandments, God raised him up to the sixth Heaven, which is what, *And We raised him to a high place* means.

A careful critic should have no doubt that these narrations are *Isrāʾīliyyāt* (fabrications based on Judeo-Christian tradition) that have been entertained by hands of forgery. They are rejected by the principles of Islamic sciences and unanimous fundamentals of the religion.

(3) He was called Hermes.

Al-Qafaṭī says by way of biographical note on Enoch: Philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ*) disagree over his birthplace, upbringing and on those he learned from before becoming a Prophet. One group says that he was born in Egypt, he was called the Hirmis (Hermes) of the Harāmisah (pl. of Hirmis). He was born in Manf. Others say that he was called ʾIrmīs (Irmis) in Greek, arabicized as Hirmis. ʾIrmīs means Mercury. Others say that his Greek name was Ṭirmīs (Tyramis). According to the Hebrews he was Khanūkh, arabicized as ʾAkhnūkh. God, Mighty and Sublime is He, calls him Enoch in His clear Arabic Book.

Those scholars say that his teacher's name was al-Ghuthādhīmūn (Agathodaimon). Alternatively, it is said that he was ʾIghthādhīmūn the Egyptian. However, they do not say who this man was. They just say that he was one of the Greek and Egyptian Prophets. They also call him ʾŪrīn II, Enoch was ʾŪrīn III. Ghuthādhīmūn (Agathodaimon) means the one of felicity and good providence. They say: Hirmis (Hermes) left Egypt and traveled the whole of the earth. He then returned there and God raised him up to Himself from there. That was when he was eighty-two years old

Another group says that Enoch was born in Babel, grew up there and started learning—at the beginning of his life—from Seth (Shīth), son of Adam, who was his great-great-grandfather because Enoch was the son of Jared (Yārid) son of Mahalalel (Mahlāʾīl) son of Kenan (Qīnān) son of Enos (ʾAnūsh) son of Seth (Shīth). Al-Shahristānī says that Agathodaimon was Seth (Shīth).

When Enoch grew up, God granted him Prophethood. Thereafter, he told mischief-makers out of the sons of Adam not to break the law of Adam and Seth (Shīth). The minority of them obeyed him but the majority disobeyed him and so he made an intention to travel away from them, ordering those who had obeyed him to do the same.

However, they felt burdened to travel away from their homelands and so they said to him: "Where will we find a place like Babel if we travel away from it?" Babel in Syriac means river. It is as if they were implying the Tigris and the Euphrates. He replied: "If we migrate toward God, He will provide us with something else". He then set off and they set off with him and they traveled until they left this region which is called Babelyon (Bāblīyūn).They then saw the Nile and saw an uninhabited valley. So Enoch stood over the Nile, praised God and said to his group: "Babelyon (Bāblīyūn)".

There is disagreement over what Babelyon (Bāblīyūn) means. One claim is that it means big river, another: a river like your river, another: blessed river and another that *yūn* in Syriac is like the superlative *afʿal* form in Arabic. It thus meant the 'Greatest River'. The region is called Babelyon by all groups among the nations, apart from the Arabs who call it the region of Miṣr, named after Miṣr son of Ḥām who settled there after the flood. However, God knows best about all of that.

Enoch and everyone who was with him stayed in Egypt calling all people to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and to obey God, Mighty and Sublime is He. In his days, the people spoke in seventy-two languages. God, Mighty and Sublime is He, taught him their languages so that he could teach each group in their own language. He designed the layout of their cities. All the students of every city were gathered before him and he would familiarize them with the policy of the city. Its foundations were laid for them and every group out of the nations built a city in their own land. The number of cities built in his time was a hundred and eighty-eight cities, the smallest of which was al-Rahā. He taught them all the sciences. He was the first to derive wisdom (*ḥikma*) and astronomy because God, Mighty and Sublime is He, made him understand the secret and structure of the celestial sphere and the nodes or points of intersection of Heavenly bodies within it and made him understand the number of years and the calculation of time. Were it not for that, minds with all their inductive reason would not have achieved that.

He established socio-political norms for every region, each set of norms being appropriate to its people. He divided the land into four quarters, appointing a king over each quarter to administer the affairs for that quarter. He instructed every king to bind the people of the quarter by a code of religious law, some of which will be referred to below. The names of the four kings were Ilawus (ʾIlāwūs), which means the Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*), ʾAws, Saqalabyus (Saqalabīyūs) and Awsamun (ʾAwsʿāmūn), or Ilawusamun (ʾĪlāwūs ʾĀmūn), or, Yasilukhus (Yasīlūkhus), that is, Amun (ʾĀmūn) the King.[1]

These hadiths and reports go back to what occurred in prehistoric times. Hence, they cannot be relied upon so much. However, the continued reference to his memory by philosophers and people of knowledge, generation after generation, their reverence and respect for him and their attribution of the fundamentals of knowledge to him reveals that he was one of the oldest father figures of knowledge. He was one of those great figures who led the human world into the realm of deductive thought and inspired it to continuously search for deeper knowledge of the divine sciences. Alternatively, if he is not one of the oldest father figures, he may have been the very first of them.

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1 *Ikhbār al-ʿUlamāʾ bi Akhbār al-Hukamāʾ*

Verses 58-63

It was stated above in the discussion regarding the purpose of the sūrah that what can be inferred from its context is clarification that worshiping Him —that is, monotheism (*tawḥīd*)—is the religion of the people of felicity and guidance from the Prophets and the Saints (*awliyāʾ*). Disembarking from their path by neglecting praying and following desires is equivalent to following the path of manifest error unless one repents, believes and performs good deeds.

The previous verses—especially the first three—contain the core purpose of the sūrah. These verses are presented in the form of a deduction from the stories told in the earlier verses. This is what distinguishes this sūrah from the other long chapters in the Qur'an. Other chapters allude to their purpose at their beginning and end. They achieve this allusion by way of innovative openings and eloquent endings, rather than in their middle point.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا ۚ إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَٰنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ﴿٥٨﴾

(19:58) ***These are they on whom God bestowed favors, from among the Prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose; when the communications of the Beneficent were recited to them, they fell in prostration*** **(sujjadan)** ***and weeping*** **(bukiyyan).**

The demonstrative pronoun *ulāʾika* (these) refers to those mentioned before this verse, within the sūrah, that is, Zachariah, John, Mary, Jesus, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Ishmael, and Enoch. This point was made earlier when discussing the context and the line of reasoning of the verses. It was said that the stories told in the previous verses are examples from which the truths expressed in verses 58-60 can be deduced.

Pondering over the context and line of reasoning of these verses leads to the conclusion that *ulāʾika*—which refers to the characters named in the stories—has to be the inchoative (*mubtadaʾ*); *these are they on whom God bestowed favors* has to be the adjective describing the inchoative and, *when the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them …* has to be the enunciative (*khabar*).

Note that it is possible to take on the clause, *whom God has bestowed favors* as the enunciative (*khabar*) of these (*ulāʾika*), then, *when the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them …* becomes an enunciative to it after an enunciative. However this is not fit very will with the aim of the sūrah.

God tells us that He has bestowed blessings upon them in the absolute sense of the word. This indicates that they were enveloped in divine blessings without any wretchedness. This is what felicity means because it is nothing but blessing without any wretchedness. They are the people of felicity (*saʿādah*) and success in the complete sense of the word. In fact, God said of them that they were the people of the "straight path", the travelers along which are protected from divine wrath and misguidance—as He says: *Keep us on the right path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors. Not (the path) of those on whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray* (1:6-7).

They are granted safety and guidance because they are: *Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with iniquity, those are they who shall have the security and they are those who go aright* (6:82).

Thus, the people of the straight path that are protected from divine wrath and misguidance are those who have not mixed up their faith with iniquity, are safe from every danger or affliction to which a human being can be subjected. Hence, they are enjoying felicity (*saʿādah*) by virtue of adopting the way of life which they have adopted. Conversely, the course that they have taken is the path to felicity.

Min in *min al-nabiyyīn* (from among the Prophets), is partitive (*tabʿīḍ*). It has the same function as *min* in *wa mimman hadaydā* (and of those whom We guided and chose), as will be explained. Exegetes have also thought it possible that *min* is explanatory (*bayāniyyah*). However, the reader will know that it does not fit *ulāʾika* (these), [in references to the Prophets and Saints in this sūrah,] because *al-nabiyyīn* (the Prophets) is a larger superset. On the other hand *min* could be accepted as explanatory

if it refers to these (*ulāʾika*) as examples of the people of felicity. Put all together, the verse would read as: "These individuals mentioned earlier on and their likes are the recipients of God's favor. They are the Prophets and those We have guided and chosen".

Min dhurriyyati Ādam (of the seed of Adam), acts as an adjective for the Prophets (*al-nabiyyīn*). *Min* (of) in *min dhurriyyati Ādam* is partitive, meaning: "from among the Prophets who are of the seed of Adam". It is not explanatory (*bayāniyyah*) of *al-nabiyyīn* (the Prophets), otherwise the interpretation would have deviated from the intended meaning of the verse.

The phrase, *and of those We carried with Noah* is annexed with a conjunction to, *of the seed of Adam*. It means those carried in Noah's ark and their offspring, all of whom were recipients of God's blessings as evidenced by: *And We made his offspring the survivors* (37:77).

The phrase, *and of the seed of Abraham and Israel*, like its predecessor, *and of those We carried with Noah*, is annexed with a conjunction to, *from among the Prophets*. God has divided those of the Prophets upon whom He has bestowed favors into four categories: 1) The seed of Adam; 2) Those carried with Noah; 3) The seed of Abraham; and 4) The seed of Israel.

Reference to each previous one would normally make it unnecessary to refer to each latter one because the seed of Israel is of the seed of Abraham. All of them were carried with Noah and all are of the seed of Adam. The reason for referring to them in this way may be to allude to the above mentioned gift of felicity (*saʿadah*) and the blessing of Prophethood sent down to the human species time after time. That is referred to in four places in the Noble Qur'an, for four groups:

(1) All the children of Adam in:
We said: Go forth from this (state) all; so surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject My communications, they are the inmates of the fires; in it they shall abide (2:38-39).

(2) Those carried with Noah in:
It was said: O Noah! Descend with peace from Us and blessings on you and on the people from among those who are with you, and there shall be nations whom We will afford provisions, then a painful punishment from Us shall afflict them (11:48).

(3) The children of Abraham in:
And certainly We sent Noah and Abraham and We gave to their offspring the (gift of) Prophethood and the Book; so there are among them those who go aright, and most of them are transgressors (57:26).

(4) The children of Israel in:
And certainly We gave the Book and the wisdom and the Prophethood to the children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations (45:16).

These are four appointed times when the human race has had the favor of Prophethood and the gift of felicity bestowed on it. It is referred to in the verse under discussion in the clause, *from among the Prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel*. Some out of all four "seeds" were referred in the above stories—Enoch was of the seed of Adam; Abraham was of the seed of those carried with Noah; Isaac and Jacob were of the seed of Abraham; and Zachariah, John, Jesus, Moses, Aaron, and Ishmael—as we have made evident—were of the seed of Israel.

The clause, *and of those whom We guided and chose* is annexed with a conjunction to, *from among the Prophets*. This clause refers to those who are not Prophets. However, they are those upon whom God bestowed favor. This favor is not exclusive to Prophets and not restricted to them, as evidenced by: *And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom God has bestowed favors from among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good, and a goodly company are they!* (4:69)

One of those whose story God revealed was Mary, paying special attention to her when He said: *And mention Mary in the Book* even though she was not a Prophetess. Hence, *and of those We guided* indubitably means the truthful ones, the martyrs, and the pious ones that are not Prophets. Mary was one of the truthful ones as evidenced by: *The Messiah, son of Mary is but a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away; and his mother was a truthful woman* (5:75).

Claim: The clause, *and of those whom We guided and chose* is annexed with a conjunction to, *from among the Prophets* while the preposition *min* (of) is explanatory (*bayāniyyah*).

Reply: The incorrectness of this is clear from the above—from what

the context dictates.

Some exegetes also object to this by saying that what precedes a conjunction normally has to differ from what follows it. Based on this premise, *these are they on whom God bestowed favors, from among the Prophets … and of those whom We guided and chose* would have to mean "out of those in whom we brought together Prophethood, guidance, and being chosen for favor". However, this is contrary to the apparent meaning.

It is important to note the apparent meaning of a conjunction does not mean that what is joined by it must be a completed disjoint such that an instance cannot be found that is part of both sides of the conjunction. Instead, it is the complete set of what is on each side of the conjunction and are described such that they are not one and the same.

Claim: The clause, *and of those whom We guided and chose* is annexed with a conjunction to, *of the seed of Adam*. *Min* (of) is partitive.

Reply: The incorrectness of this claim is clear from the above.

Claim: The clause, *and of those whom We guided* begins a new sentence. It is not connected to the previous sentence which finished with Israel. The new sentence then begins with, *and of those whom We guided and chose* out of the nations and they were people, *who when the communications of the Beneficent were recited to them, they fell in prostration and weeping*. The subject is left implied because it is indicated by what is expressly stated.

This explanation is attributed to the exegete Abū Muslim.

Reply: This is inference of an implied meaning without any evidential basis for it. Furthermore, the whole purpose is defeated as testified to by the context, because the aim is to explain how those servants upon whom favors were bestowed submitted to God, and were humble before Him while those who came after them, turned away from their path, neglected prayer, and followed base desires. This can only be achieved if, *when the communications of the Beneficent were recited to them …* is the predicate to, *These are they on whom God bestowed favors*. Treating the clause, *and of those whom We guided* as a new sentence completely defeats the aforementioned purpose.

***When the communications of the Beneficent were recited to them, they fell in prostration* (sujjadan) *and weeping* (bukiyyan):** *Sujjad* is the plural of *sājid* which means prostrate. *Bukiyy* of the *fuʿul* morphological form is the plural of *bākī*, an adjective which means weeping. The sentence is

the enunciative (*khabar*) of "these" at the beginning of the verse. Falling in prostration and weeping may be a metonymy for complete submissiveness (*khudūʿ*) and humility (*khushūʿ*), respectively. Prostration represents complete submission just as weeping represents complete humility. On this basis, the most appropriate interpretation of communications (*ayāt*) and its recitation is the mention of anything that pertains to Him.

Other interpretations include those that said:

(1) "recitation of communications" means recitation of any Heavenly scriptures or specifically those which contain reference to the punishment of unbelievers and sinners;

(2) "prostration" means prayer or prostration, which is necessary when certain verses are heard (*sajdat al-tilāwa*); and

(3) "weeping" means weeping upon hearing or reciting the verses.

The problem with all of the following claims is obvious.

In conclusion, the verse means, and God knows best: "Those are the ones upon whom God has bestowed favors, some of whom are Prophets of the seed of Adam and of those We carried with Noah and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, some of whom are those that have been guided and chosen. They are the ones that are overcome with humility and submissiveness to the Beneficent at the mention of His remembrance and His signs".

Note that He does not say: *kānū idhā tutlā ʿalayhim*, meaning, they were such that when the communications of the Beneficent were recited to them…, because the intended meaning here is to list the groups in terms of their conduct without regard to the past or future exclusively. Rather, the point is to divide people into three groups [across the line of time], namely the righteous predecessors, the depraved successors and, thirdly, those who repent and perform good deeds. This is the apparent meaning.

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوَاتِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا ﴿٥٩﴾

(19:59) ***But there came after them*** **(khalf)** ***an evil generation who neglected prayers*** **(aḍāʿu al-ṣalāt)** ***and followed sensual desires, so they will meet perdition*** **(ghayy)**.

Khalf means a bad substitute and *khalaf* means a good substitute. Rarely, the two spellings may be used the other way round. *Ḍayāʿ al-shayʾ* refers to something becoming invalid or lost due to negligence. One says

aḍāʿa al-māl when someone ruins property by managing it badly or loses possession of it by spending it recklessly.

Ghayy is the opposite of *rushd* which means to see things as they are. The meaning of *ghayy* is similar to *ḍalāl* (error), which is the opposite of *hudā*. *Hudā* means taking the road which gets one to one's desired goal. Hence, *ghayy* is error that leads to loss or perdition.

But there came after them an evil generation … means that in the place of those on whom God bestowed favors and whose path was humility and subservience to God through devout worship, there came those who lost this priceless heritage of prayer (*ṣalāt*) and taking submission to God lightly and turning away from it. Instead, they pursued base desires that detracted them from striving for God and directing themselves towards Him.

Thus it is clear that the loss of prayer (*ṣalāt*), referred to by the expression *aḍāʿū al-ṣalāt* in the verse, means corrupting their performance of it by neglecting it and not taking it seriously. They got to the point that they let it become like a game, changing it and forsaking it after having taken and accepted it. Hence the claim that *aḍāʿū al-ṣalāt*, they lost their prayers out of neglect, means that they stopped praying, is not correct because ceasing to pray altogether and suddenly is not called *iḍāʿa*. Instead, what the verse means is that the divine religion passed from that pious earlier generation to that later corrupt generation who were not good heirs. These bad heirs neglected what they had inherited, namely prayer, which was the only pillar of worship and servitude to God, instead following base desires which diverted them from the truth.

Exegetes have said that, *so they will meet perdition* means the punishment for their error like the verse … *and he who does this shall find a requital of sin* (25:68).

Alternatively, it is possible that it means that the path they chose of neglecting prayer and following desires has error (*ghayy*) as its very objective. Thus if they follow a path, the end of which is error, that leads to perdition (*ghayy*), they will meet it when they complete it in one of two ways or both. One way they will meet their perdition is when it becomes clear to them on the Day of Resurrection—when realities become apparent. Another way they will meet their perdition is when the error that leads to it takes abode in their hearts and they become friends (*awliyāʾ*) to Satan, as in: *Surely, as regards My servants, you have no authority over*

them except those who follow you of the deviators (15:42).

Whatever the case may be, it is a subtle metaphor by way of metonymy.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٠﴾

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(19:60) ***Except such as repent and believe and do good, these shall enter the Garden, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly in any way.***

This is an exception to the previous verse. It states that, by repenting, believing and doing good, those in the exception are turning back towards God and will be joined to those whom God has bestowed favors. Hence, they are with them but not of them as He says: *And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom God has bestowed favors from among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good, and a goodly company are they!* (4:69).

The clause, *these shall enter the Garden* is an instance of placing the effect in lieu of the cause. This underlying meaning is: "They will be given their full reward" as evidenced by what He says next, *and they shall not be dealt with unjustly in any way*. Not being dealt with unjustly necessitates being given their full reward while not being concomitant to entering the Paradise.

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جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًّا ﴿٦١﴾

(19:61) ***The Gardens of perpetuity*** **(ʿadn)** ***which the Beneficent has promised to His servants while unseen; surely His promise shall come to pass*** **(maʾtiyyan).**

The word *ʿadn* means residence. Naming it as such communicates the perpetuity of Paradise for those entering in it. A promise of the unseen is a promise of something not perceivable to the one to whom the promise is made. The promise being *maʾtiyyan*, means that it will not be broken.

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Majmaʿ al-bayān says: The object (*mufʿūl*) is used here but it is the subject (*fāʿil*) which is intended because what you reach, reaches you and what reaches you, you reach. One says: "I reached fifty [years]" (*ataytu khamsīn sana*), or, "Fifty years came to me" (*atat ʿalayya khamsūna sana*). Some exegetes have said that, that which is promised is Heaven and Heaven is reached by the believers.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ رِزْقُهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿٦٢﴾

(19:62) ***They shall not hear therein any vain discourse, but only Peace, and they shall have their sustenance therein morning and evening.***

Not hearing any vain discourse is one of the most distinctive attributes of Heaven. The foretelling of this particular divine favor has surfaced in numerous Qur'anic verses. It will be discussed in detail at an appropriate juncture. Note that peace (*salām*) is being made an exception to vain discourse (*laghu*) in the form of a grammatical contrast called *ʾistithnāʾ munfaṣil*, the disjoint exception, which is a category of exception in which that which is in the exception and that which is in the rule are not of the same kind.

The meaning of *salām* which signifies peace is very similar to the meaning of *ʾamn* which signifies safety. The difference between the two was discussed above. When one says: "*ʾAnta minnī fī ʾamn*, you are in safety from me" it means you will not encounter anything from me which harms you. When one says: "*Salāmun minnī ʿalayk*, peace be unto you". it means: "Nothing you encounter from me will harm you". Indeed, they will hear peace from the Angels and their companions in Heaven. He says, quoting the Angels: *Peace be on you, you shall be happy* (39:73); *Then peace to you from those on the right hand* (56:91).

The clause, *and they shall have their sustenance therein morning and evening* describes their provision of sustenance morning and evening. Morning and evening is a metonymy for their receiving it continuously, without stop.

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿٦٣﴾

(19:63) ***This is the Garden which We cause those of Our servants to inherit*** **(nurithu min ʿibādinā)** ***who guard (against evil).***

The words *irth* and *wirātha* mean property or something similar passing from one person to another after the first person departs from it by way of death, evacuation or the like. Since Heaven, according to the divine promise, will be given to every human being on condition of faith and righteous action, the inheritance of the Godwary, those who guard against evil is the restriction of Paradise to them at the exclusion of the others

who lost their prayers through neglect and followed their base desires. The meaning is similar to: *And certainly We wrote in the Book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it* (21:105). *And they shall say: (All) praise is due to God, who has made good to us His promise, and He has made us inherit the land; we may abide in the Garden where we please; so goodly is the reward of the workers* (39:74).

As the reader can see, the verse combines inheritance with reward.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says about, *and of those whom We guided and chose* that it is narrated that ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn said: "It means us".

(2) *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* by Ibn Shahrāshūb says the same, also on his authority.

Author's comment: The meaning of the verse is clear on the basis of the aforementioned exegesis of the verse because the phrase, *and of those whom We guided and chose*, refers to those people who are guided and chosen without being Prophets. They are some of them just as God referred to Mary's being one of them while she was not a Prophetess.

(3) *Ruḥ al-maᶜānī* says: One of the Imāmiyya narrates that ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥusayn said: 'Those people' means us. This is really contrary to the apparent meaning. The way the Imāmiyya's oral traditions are is obvious to learned people.

Author's comment: His error is clear on the basis of the above. What made him make this mistake is his treatment of the clause, *and of those whom We guided and chose* as joined with the conjunction to, *of the seed of Adam and from among the Prophets* for the two of which are qualifying *These are they …* Consequently, the phrase, *These are they on whom God bestowed favors* was seen as exclusive to the Prophets. Accordingly, he was forced to say that the verse does not apply to anyone who is not a Prophet even though he could see that one of those referred to by God was Mary daughter of Amram who was not a Prophetess.

(4) Saᶜīd al-Khudrī says: I heard God's Messenger recite this verse, *But there came after them an evil generation* and say: There will be a generation after sixty years who will neglect prayer and follow [their] desires. They will meet perdition. Then there will be a generation who recite the Qur'an but it will not pass their throats. Three groups will recite the Qur'an: Believers, hypocrites, and

open sinners.[1]

(5) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says about neglected prayer: It is said that they neglected it by delaying it past its appointed times without forsaking it completely. This is narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq

Author's comment: Something to the same effect is narrated in *al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration back to Dāwūd b. Farqad on his authority. It is also narrated by Ahl al-Sunna on the authority of Ibn Masᶜūd and several of the followers (*tabiᶜīn*).[2]

(6) *Jawāmiᶜ al-jāmiᶜ* and *Ruḥ al-maᶜānī* say on the authority of ᶜAlī about, *and followed sensual desires*: Those who build the pompous, ride the ostentatious, and wear the conspicuous.

(7) The Prophet said: *al-Ghayy* (Perdition or Error) is a valley in Hell.[3]

Author's comment: Other oral traditions say that *Ghayy* (Perdition) and *Athām* (Sins) are two rivers in Hell. Assuming the hadith to be authentic, it is not an alternative interpretation as the majority of exegetes claim. On the contrary, it is an explanation of where *ghayy* leads in terms of punishment. It is similar to a number of oral traditions including those that recount that *al-Wayl* is a well in Hell and that *Ṭūbā* is a tree in Heaven.

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* citing Aḥmad, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān, and al-Ḥakīm who also deemed it to be authentic, Ibn Mardawayh and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuᶜab al-īmān*.

2 *Tabiᶜīn* were early Muslims born after the death of the Messenger and were contemporaries of his companions. (Ed.)

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Mardawayh via Nahshal on the authority of al-Ḍaḥḥāk on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās.

Verses 64-65

These two verses are a digression from the rest of the verses in the sūrah. Their flow of meaning testifies to the fact that they are the words of the Angel of revelation revealed as Qur'an by God because the composition (*naḍhm*) is indubitably a Qur'anic one. Thus, there is support for that which is narrated via various of Ahl al-Sunna's chains of narration and narrated also in *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* via Ibn ᶜAbbās that God's Messenger thought that Gabriel was slow in coming down, so he asked him about it. He replied in the form of revelation from God , *And we do not descend but by the command of your Lord …*

A number of exegetes went to great pains to come up with explanations to show that the two verses are connected to the previous ones. Some exegetes said that the verses mean: "This being said, Gabriel said: And we do not descend but by the command of your Lord … ". Others said that these two verses are linked to what Gabriel said to Mary—cited earlier: *I am only a messenger of your Lord: That I will give you a boy who will grow up properly …* Another group said that, *And we do not descend but by the command of your Lord …* are the words of those who are Godwary (*al-muttaqīn*) when they enter Heaven. In other words, it is as if the verse read: "And those who are God-fearing said: And we do not descend into Heaven but by the command of your Lord … ". Other claims have also been made.

They are all clearly brittle explanations unsupported by the context and below standards of effective literary composition. There is no need to labor on explaining the ways in which they are wrong. Another explanation for how they are connected appears at the end of our discussion of the second verse.

وَمَا نَتَنَزَّلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ ۖ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ ۚ
وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ﴿٦٤﴾

(19:64) ***And we do not descend* (tanazzul)** ***but by the command of your Lord; to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these, and your Lord is not***

forgetful.

The word *tanazzul* means descending slowly without haste. *Tanazzal* is the submissive form of *nazal* and it expresses the action of descending in submission to a command or pressure. In Arabic, one says *nazzalahu*, he made him descend, *fa tanazzal*, and so he descended. The negation, *we do not descend*, followed by the exception, *but by the command of your Lord*, together produce a restrictive. Thus, the Angels only descend by God's command—as He says: *… they do not disobey God in what He commands them, and [they] do as they are commanded* (66:6).

… to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these: One says that such and such a thing is *qudāmahu*, ahead of him, *amāmahu*, in front of him, or *bayna yadayhi*, literally between his hands,—they all mean the same thing, that is, before or in front of him. The only minor difference is that one says *bayna yadayhi* of something which is close to a person, which he oversees or which he manipulates and controls. Thus the apparent meaning of whatever is between our hands [or whatever is before us] is whatever we oversee, which is exposed and visible to us. The apparent (*ḍhāhir*) meaning of *whatever is behind us*, by virtue of being opposite to what preceded it, is whatever is absent or concealed from us. Consequently, if *whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these* are locative descriptors, then they encompass what is before them, the space they are in, and some of what is behind without applying to every place. Similarly, if the said descriptors are time qualifiers, then they only apply to the the past, the present, and the near future. The line of reasoning of the phrase, *to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these* is more conducive to full and not partial breadth.

Hence, *whatever is before us* should be interpreted as the actions that the Angels perform and control as well as the effects of their actions on their existence. In turn, *whatever is behind us* refers to the causes of their existence that naturally came before them. Finally, *whatever is between these* refers to their very existence. It is one of the most original and elegant expressions. It is in this fashion that they [the Angels] are entirely contained by divine encompassment. Indeed, the verse ultimately refers back to God Who is the Owner (*Mālik*) of our existence and everything pertaining to it, be it past or present.

There are differences of opinion over the exegesis of this sentence:

(1) *Whatever is before us* means the future and *whatever is behind us* means the past and *whatever is between these* means the present.
(2) *Whatever is before us* refers to what was before the Angels' coming to being. *Whatever is behind us* refers to what will be after their death to the perpetuity of the Hereafter. *Whatever is between these* refers to what is during their lifetime.
(3) *Whatever is before us* refers to what is in this world (*dunyā*) till the first blow [of the trumpet]. *Whatever is behind us* refers to what comes after the second blow. *Whatever is between these* refers to what will be between the two blows, that is, forty years.
(4) *Whatever is before us* refers to the Hereafter, while *whatever is behind us* alludes to this world.
(5) *Whatever is before us* means what came before creation. *Whatever is behind us* means what will come after annihilation (*fanā'*). *Whatever is between these* means what comes between this world and the Hereafter.
(6) *Whatever is before us* means what remains of the matter of this world. *Whatever is behind us* means whatever has passed of the matter of this world. *Whatever is between these* means what they are in currently.
(7) *Whatever is before us* means the beginning of their creation. *Whatever is behind us* refers to the end of their lives. *Whatever is between these* is the duration of their lives.
(8) *Whatever is before us* means the sky. *Whatever is behind us* means the earth. *Whatever is between these* means whatever is between the two.
(9) The opposite of (8) above.
(10) *Whatever is before us* means the place they are moving towards. *Whatever is behind us* means the place they have come from. *Whatever is between these* means the place they are in.

The last three opinions all have one thing in common, taking "whatever" to refer to a place. In the first seven, "whatever" was taken to refer to time. Another opinion is that the verse applies both to time and to place; this brings the total up to eleven opinions, none of which have any evidence. Moreover, they contain parts that ascribe what is for Angels to human beings.

The correct interpretation is the one we presented above.[1] Thus, *whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these* means that the total reign of His rulership over them is true ownership over which no one else has disposal and over which no one else has any power except by His permission and by His will. The Angels do not disobey and do not do a single thing without His commanding them or without His permission; they do not want anything that God does not want. Thus, an Angel only descends by his Lord's command.

Hence, it is confirmed that the clause, *to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us and whatever is between these* provides an explanation for the phrase, *And we do not descend but by the command of your Lord* with the words, *and your Lord is not forgetful* concluding the explanation. Here, *nasiyy* is the *faʿūl* morphological form of *nisyān* meaning forgetful. In other words, the verse can be understood as saying: "He does not forget a single thing of His kingdom the negligence of which would offset the management of affairs such that, for example, He does not order descent when [His Wisdom dictates that] He should or He orders descent when [His Wisdom dictates that He] should not". This is the meaning behind preferring to negate the attribution of forgetfulness to Him over the affirmation of His knowledge or remembrance.

In the alternative, it is claimed that the clause, *and your Lord is not forgetful* means: "He does not forsake His Prophets, that is, the only reason the Angel did not descend was because he was not commanded to, not because He had forsaken you and left you to your own devices".

Reply: Even though in one respect this conforms with the aforementioned reason for revelation, it makes the justification, *to Him belongs whatever is before us*, incongruous to the proposed meaning. Note that the phrase, *The Lord of the Heavens and the earth and what is between them* becomes cut off from what precedes it—as will become apparent.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ ۚ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٦٥﴾

(19:65) ***The Lord of the Heavens and the earth and what is between***

1 Hence, whatever is before us should be interpreted as the actions that the angels perform… (Ed.)

them, so serve Him and be patient in His service. Do you know anyone equal to Him?

The beginning of the verse namely, *The Lord of the Heavens and the earth and what is between them* provides an explanation for what He said in the previous verse: *to Him belongs whatever is before us and whatever is behind us …* meaning: "How can He not be the owner of whatever is before them [, meaning the Angels], whatever is behind them and whatever is between these? How can He be forgetful when He is the Lord of the Heavens and the earth and what is between them?" The Lord (*rabb*) of something is its owner and the manager of its affairs. Thus His ownership of it and His not being forgetful are concomitant to His Lordship.

The words, *so serve Him and be patient in His service* follow on logically from the beginning of the verse. It is as if the verses [64-65] read as: "If we [the Angels] only came down by your Lord's command and we brought down to you these words comprising the call to worship Him, it is because the words are His words and the call is His call so serve Him alone, and be patient in His service. For, there is no one else called Lord apart from your Lord. Hence, there is no justification for not being steadfast upon the worship of your Lord or for turning to the exclusive worship of another so-called 'lord' or for associating partners to Him".

It may also be claimed that the sentence follows on logically from, *Lord of the Heavens and the earth* or *and your Lord is not forgetful*. The meaning thus rendered would be: "Your Lord has not forgotten you so worship Him … "

Reply: The problem with both explanations is obvious.

A number of issues have become clear through the above analysis:

First: *Do you know anyone equal* (samiyy) *to Him?* completes the rationale for the command, *so serve Him and be patient in His service*.

Second: *Samiyy* means sharing the same name. The principal message of the verse being to establish His absolute lordship over all things, the name in question here is *al-Rabb*, the Lord. Hence, it is as if He is saying: "Do you know anyone with the attribute of lordship who has been called Lord, for this reason, such that it [would] warrant your turning away from Him towards the exclusive worship of that other [lord]?" Thus, the incorrectness of the vast majority of what has been said about the interpretation of the word *samiyy* in this verse becomes clear. Such views include that:

- It means the like, metaphorically;

- It means son without being literal.

- It means son literally despite the fact that a name's purpose is not to be shared but to distinguish and that the name in question is Lord of the Heavens and earth;

- It is the proper name of God (*ism al-jalāla*), *Allāh*;

- It means *al-Ilāh* (God);

- It means *al-Raḥmān* (the Merciful);

- It means God the Creator, the Provider, the Giver and Taker of Life, the One Who is capable of reward and punishment.

Third: The reason for annexing the word *rabb* with the second person pronoun and the repetition of it in the verse: *by the command of your Lord*; *your Lord is not …* as opposed to saying "our Lord" is to prepare for the concluding remarks, in verse 65, that express God's Unity. In other words, the expression *your Lord* communicates the fact that "our Lord" by whose command we descend is your Lord. The call is His call, so serve Him. This dynamic may also be at play with, *your Lord* in the beginning of the sūrah with, *a mention of the mercy of your Lord*, especially that the verses are, as we have pointed out earlier, part of a single line of meaning and reasoning and have a single purpose.

Fourth: The words, *So serve Him and be patient in His service* have, in essence, the sole purpose of commanding that worship and service should be exclusive to God. Hence, the command to worship and serve and the command to be steadfast and constant in worship and service, are two commands in one that are inseparably concomitant to each other. It is important to understand this.

It could be inferred from the use of the conjunction *fa* which means therefore, in the segment of verse 65, *therefore serve Him and be patient in His service*, that it came to emphasize and confirm the discourse of the verses that preceded these two verses. Thus the link between these two verses and the previous verses becomes clear, obviating the need to treat them as a complete digression.

Thus, it is as if after the Angel of revelation brought the sūrah down to him and revealed to him its sixty-three verses containing a comprehensive call to the pure religion, he told him that he had not hitherto descended, and, would not descend on his own initiative, but rather by a command from his Lord and with a Message from Him. Thus the words were His Words and the call was His call—He is the Lord of the Prophet

and of all things so he should serve Him alone. There is no other Lord to turn to. Thus, the two verses are part of what was revealed to the Angel of revelation to transmit it to the Prophet to strengthen his heart and to reinforce the previous verses.

This is similar to a king sending a messenger with a letter from him or a message to one of his workers. The messenger then comes to him and when he reads him the letter or passes on the message, he says to the worker: "I have not come to you on my own initiative but rather by the king's command and instruction. The letter is his letter and the message is his words and ruling. He is your king and the king of everyone in the kingdom, so listen to him, obey him, and stick to it. There is no other king but him to turn to".

This messenger's words are confirmation of the king's words and if it is supposed that it was the king who commanded him to follow up the message with these words, they are the messenger's words but also a message from the king and the king's words. Obviously this explanation is more in conformity with the two verses and more clearly appropriate to them than the oral traditions about the context of revelation not to mention their discrepancies and weakness.

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Verses 66-72

This set of verses refers to the same context of the set of verses (59-63). It can be regarded as an appending part to the verse, *But there came after them an evil generation who neglected prayers and followed sensual desires, so they will meet perdition* (19:59). It refers to some of the utterances made by the evil generation because of their deviation where they express doubt or disbelief in resurrection, Prophethood and creation.

The seven verses, 66-72, starts by mentioning their false belief in the unlikeliness of resurrection. Then, the verses respond to what they said and point out to its evil consequence.

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَإِذَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا ﴿٦٦﴾

(19:66) ***And says man: What! when I am dead shall I truly be brought forth alive?***

This verse presents the discourse of the unbelievers who deny resurrection by ruling out the possibility that such thing will happen. Unbelievers include the polytheists and those who follow them such as the people who deny that there is a Creator. Indeed, the disposition of the human beings is to incline to such opinion in the beginning before returning to the evidence.

Claim: That is why this statement is attributed to man whereas one would have expected it to say: "And says the unbeliever" or "And say those who do not believe", etc.

Reply: This does not fit His subsequent words: *So by your Lord! We will most certainly gather them together and the Satans … to be burned therein.* It would not be surprising if the word "man", which refers to those who question resurrection refers only to the unbelievers who deny resurrection. They are only referred to as "man" because the better is expected from him, especially [the fact] that God has equipped him with rational perception.

This disbelieving human being is aware that God created him before, when he was nothing, so it should not surprising that He would resurrect him back to life once more. Instead, it is rather surprising that man

should be incredulous regarding this reality. That is why the word "man" (*insān*) is repeated again in the response: *Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing?* In other words, it is as if it responded: "He is a human being. He should not find it difficult to believe that something similar to what he has already witnessed—and not forgotten—could happen again". The use of the present tense in the clause, *And says man* may be an allusion to this incredulity continuing in those who deny resurrection or those who doubt it.

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٧﴾

(19:67) ***Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing?***

The rhetorical question signifies the exclamation and unlikelihood of man forgetting how he was created before. The meaning of the verse is obvious. The first question in verse 66, which questions the ability to resurrect the dead, is countered by the fact that a similar thing happened already when man is created. Thus, the unbelievers' expression that resurrection would unlikely occur is countered by an example of something similar which has already occurred. This proves the ability to resurrect people.

The method of proof in this verse is similar to the proof presented in the following verse: *And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first … Is not He Who created the Heavens and the earth able to create the like of them?* (36:79-81).

Claim: Arguing that the like of it has already happened only proves that the like can happen again. What needs to be proven in resurrection is that the **exact same** person, not to the like of him, will return—the like of something is not identical to itself.

Response: To this objection the response given is that these verses are concerned with proving that the bodies will be resurrected. Indeed, these resurrected bodies are similar to the bodies that are created initially. However, a human is defined by his distinct self not by his body. Therefore, if the body is created for the second time and the self is associated with it, the result will still be the exact same human being. This is true even if the body, which is the part of the human being made in likeness to the

worldly body, is not the exact same one. This is the same as the fact that the identity of a human being and his distinctness are preserved during his life despite aging and its corresponding changes to the body such that many parts might change from one state to another, or it might even get replaced. Although in case of aging the body changes its state and differs from its original created image, man remains the same in both cases preserving his same singular identity. This is alluded to in: *And they say: What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation? Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: The Angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die* (32:10-11).

In other words, "You will be taken intact from your bodies without being lost or going astray".

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا ﴿٦٨﴾

(19:68) ***So by your Lord! We will most certainly gather them together and the Satans, then shall We certainly cause them to be present round hell on their knees*** **(jathiyy).**

The word *jathiyy* is the plural of *jāthin*. It is of the *faʿūl* adjective form. It means kneeling. [There is a hadith that] is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās that states that it is the plural of *juthwah*, which is a mass of dust and stone. It means that when they are summoned in throngs and groups they will be piled on top of each other. This interpretation is more appropriate to the context.

The third person plural pronoun in the clause, *We will most certainly gather them together … then shall We certainly cause them to be present* refers to the unbelievers. Verses 68–70 address their predicament on the Day of Resurrection, and this is clear.

Claim: The two pronouns refer to people—both believers and unbelievers—just like the second person plural in the clause, *And there is not one of you but shall come to it*.

Reply: This is contradicted by the tone of wrath and punishment in the three verses which is directed specifically to the disbelievers.

We will most certainly gather them together and the Satans means gathering them outside their graves with their associates, the devils, since they are in perdition on account of not having any faith. As He says: *so they will meet perdition* (19:59). God also states that, the devils will be their

guardians. He says elsewhere: *Surely as regards My servants, you have no authority over them except those who follow you of the deviators* (15:42). *… surely We have made the Satans to be the guardians of those who do not believe* (7:27).

Alternatively it means they will be gathered together with their peers—the devils. As He says: *And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Beneficent, We appoint for him a Satan, so he becomes his associate. And most surely they turn them away from the path, and they think that they are guided aright: Until when he comes to Us, he says: O would that between me and you there were the distance of the East and the West; so evil is the associate! And since you were unjust, it will not profit you this day that you are sharers in the chastisement* (43:36-39).

Thus, the verse can be understood as saying: "By your Lord! We will most certainly gather them together on the Day of Resurrection, along with their guardians and peers from the devils. Then, We shall certainly cause them to be present around Hell to be punished while they kneel in humiliation or or while they come in groups, throng by throng".

So by your Lord! … marks a shift in the direction of speech from addressing the unbelievers to talking about them. The reason for this change may be to keep to the dynamic elaborated upon with regards to the use of the clause, *your Lord* in, *by the command of your Lord*. This interplay of words is also found with, *your Lord* in *this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord …*

ثُمَّ لَنَنْزِعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ أَيُّهُمْ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَٰنِ عِتِيًّا ﴿٦٩﴾

(19:69) *Then We will most certainly draw forth* (naz^{c}) *from every sect* (shi^{c}a) *of them him who is most ostentatiously* (^{c}itiyyā) *rebellious against the Beneficent*

The word *naz^{c}* means drawing out. *Shi^{c}a* means a group who cooperate to achieve something or who follow a belief. *^{c}Itiyy* is of the *fa^{c}ūl* morphological form and means rebellious disobedience. It is likely that *ayyuhum ashaddu ^{c}alā l-Raḥmāni ^{c}itiyyan*, of them him who is most ostentatiously rebellious against the Beneficent, is an interrogative clause put in the place of the object of, *Then We will most certainly draw forth* to express how much attention is put into the determination of who are the most ostentatiously rebellious. It is like the verse: *Those whom they call upon,*

themselves seek the means of access to their Lord—whoever of them is nearest (ʾayyuhum ʾaqrab) (17:57).

Thus, the verse under discussion can be understood as: "Then We will take out of every group formed those of them who are the most rebellious against the Beneficent, that is, the chiefs and leaders of error". Alternatively, it is claimed that it means: "We will most certainly take out the most rebellious, followed by the next most rebellious until they are all taken".

There is a grammatical shift to the third person in ʿalā l-Raḥmān, against the Beneficent. The reason for this is to allude to the fact that their rebellion is serious because it is rebellion against Him whose beneficence applies to everything. They receive nothing but beneficence from Him—rebellion against One Who is such is not a small matter at all.

ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِهَا صِلِيًّا ﴿٧٠﴾

(19:70) ***Again We certainly know best those who deserve most to be burned* (ṣaliyy) *therein.***

The word *ṣaliyy* is of the *fuʿul* form. One says *ṣalā l-nār*, *yaṣlāhā ṣiliyyan* or *ṣuliyyan* meaning he suffers from the heat of fire. Therefore, the meaning is: "Then God swears that He certainly knows best who most deserves the Hellfire, to suffer from its heat. The matter of degrees of their punishment and the levels they deserve is not ambiguous to Us".

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا ۚ كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا ﴿٧١﴾

(19:71) ***And there is not one of you but shall come to it* (wāriduhā)*; this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord.***

The addressees of this verse are mankind in general, both believers and unbelievers. This is evidenced by what He says in the next verse: *And We will deliver those who fear (God)*. The pronoun in *wāriduhā* (lit. coming to it) refers to Hellfire.

Claim: The second person pronoun refers to the unbelievers referred to in verses 67–69 and there is a shift from the third person to the second person.

Reply: The context of the verse refutes that.

Wurūd (coming) is the opposite of *ṣudūr* (going out). It means seeking water, as is apparent from books of language.

Al-Rāghib says in al-*Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān*:

> The original meaning of *wurūd* is to seek water. It was then used for other things. One says: *waradtu al-māʾ* (I came to the water) and *ariduhu wurūdan* (lit., I come to it a coming). Hence, *anā wārid al-māʾ* (means, I am coming to the water) and *al-māʾ mawrūd* (means, the water is that which is come to); *qad awradtu al-ibil al-māʾ* (means, I led the camel to the water). As He says: *And when he came to* (warada) *the water of Midian* (28:23).
>
> [Al-Rāghib continues,] *wird* is a place designated for finding water. *Wird* (coming to water) is the opposite of *ṣadar* (returning from water). *Wird* can mean the day when a periodic fever comes to (*waradat*) the patient. The word is also used for Hellfire to highlight [how] dreadful it is. He says: *… and bring them to the fire and evil the place to which they are brought* (fa awradahum al-nār wa biʾsa al-wirdu al-mawrūd) (11:98); *… to hell thirsty* (ilā jahannama wirdan) (19:86); *… to it you shall come* (antum lahā waridūn) (21:98); *they would not have come to it* (mā waradūha) (21:99).
>
> A *wārid* is someone who goes ahead of his people to draw water for them. As He says: *… and they sent their water-drawer* (wāridahum) (12:19), that is, their drawer (*sāqīn*) of water from the water source.

The above is what exegetes rely on in support of their claim that people will be brought to the fire and look down on it without actually entering it. As evidence, they relied on His words: *And when he came to the water of Midian, he found on it a group of men watering* (28:23); *… and they sent their water-drawer and he let down his bucket* (12:19); *Surely (as for) those for whom the good has already gone forth from Us, they shall be kept far from it; they will not hear its faintest sound* (21:101-102).

Reply: The use of it this way, for example in: *And when he came to the water of Midian* and, *and they sent their water-drawer* in the sense of overseeing it does not mean that it cannot also be used literally to mean entering, as is claimed with regard to other verses. As for: *… they shall be kept far from it; they will not hear its faintest sound …*, a possible interpretation is that they will be taken away from it after having entered it—as can be inferred from the clause, *And We will deliver those who fear (God),* and *We will leave the unjust therein* (21:101-102). It is also possible that God

would put a barrier to their hearing its faintest sound out of respect for them, just as He put a barrier between Abraham and the heat of the fire when He said to the fire, … *be a comfort and peace to Abraham* (21:69).

Others exegetes, possibly the majority, say that the verse means that they will enter the fire. As evidence they rely on passages such as: *Surely you and what you worship besides God are the firewood of hell; to it you shall come. Had these been gods, they would not have come to it* … (21:98-99); and, referring to the Pharaoh: *He shall lead his people on the resurrection day, and bring them down to the fire* … (11:98).

More so, there is evidence for it in the next verse: *And We will deliver those who fear (God), and We will leave* (nadharu) *the unjust therein on their knees* that is, "We will leave them on their knees". One only says *nadharu*, meaning we will leave behind, if someone has entered and settled down in a place before he is abandoned and left as he is. Further evidence is provided by several oral traditions that explain this verse.

Exegetes range from those who say that everyone enters Hell to those who say that only those who do not fear God enter Hell, claiming that the clause "of you" (*minkum*) actually means "of them" similar to: … *and their Lord shall make them drink a pure drink. Surely this is a reward for you* (76:21-22).

However the context provided by the clause, *And We will deliver those who fear (God)* … does not support this.

It is unreasonable for *wurūd* in verses like: *Had these been gods, they would not have come to it* (mā waradūha) (21:99), to mean entering. On the contrary, it is more appropriate for it to mean coming and looking down on [it] because it is clearly more eloquent. The same applies to the verse: … *and bring them down to the fire* (11:98). It was Pharaoh's function as one of the leaders of error to lead his people to the fire. As for putting them in it, that is not for him to do.

The verse that follows, *And We will deliver those who fear (God), and We will leave the unjust therein* does mean that the wrongdoers will be entering hell fire. This is because the word *nadharu* (We will leave) is used. Thus, the verse signifies entering not because *wāriduhā* (shall come to it) could mean entering but rather because of the use of *nadharu*. Similarly, saving the Godwary does not necessarily mean that they will enter hell fire. This is because saving can be used in the context of those who entered hell fire and also those who were brought near to it but got saved right before

entering it, having overseen the fall of others and witnessed it.

As for the oral traditions, they are concerned with explaining the event and not determining what the word *wāriduhā* means in this verse. Hence, they cannot be relied on as evidence that *wurūd* means their actually entering Hell.

Objection: Why can it not mean the appropriateness of their entering, that is, it would not be inappropriate for any of you to go to Hell. Those who are delivered are only delivered by God. This is identical to: … *and were it not for God's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure* (24:21).

Reply: It means *wurūd* (coming to it) as what mankind's nature dictates because whatever goodness and happiness he has is from God. Nothing of his own is left, apart from evil and wretchedness. However, this is contradicted by what the very end of the verse says, *this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord*, which clearly shows that coming to it is through God's making mankind come to it through His unavoidable decree, as opposed to what the nature of things dictates.

The truth of the matter is that *wurūd* means no more than intentionally coming to and standing over—as can be inferred from dictionaries.

The clause, *And there is not one of you but shall come to it* only means intentionally coming to; this does not contradict the next verse's meaning that everyone or just the wrongdoers will actually enter Hell after coming to witness it: *And We will deliver those who fear (God), and We will leave the unjust therein on their knees.*

The subject of the verb 'is' (*kāna*) in the clause, *this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord* is "the coming to it" (*al-wurūd*). Alternatively, the subject can be taken as the decree defined by the whole of the previous sentence, *and there is not one of you but shall come to it*. *Ḥatm*, meaning inevitability, *jazm*, meaning certainty, and *qaṭ*ᶜ, meaning definiteness, all mean the same thing, that is, that this coming or decree is "incumbent" upon Him and unavoidable. Note that it is He alone that decrees it upon Himself because there is no higher judge by whose ruling He is "bound".

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا ﴿٧٢﴾

(19:72) ***And We will deliver those who fear (God), and We will leave the unjust therein on their knees.***

It was stated above that the clause, *We will leave the unjust therein* means that the unjust will enter Hell and be left as they are and that deliverance of the Godwary—does not mean that they literally enter it. This is because the result can be achieved without their necessarily doing so, unless one takes the expressions, *We will deliver those who fear (God) and We will leave the unjust therein* as sharing the same context [of having occurred after having entered the Hellfire]. Use of the word "unjust" suggests that the attribute is the cause of the sentence of a given person to remain in the Hellfire.

Thus the two verses (71–72) mean:

"There is not a single one of you—either Godwary or the unjust—who will not come upon Hell. Making everyone come [upon Hell] has been decreed by your Lord upon Himself. We will, however, then deliver those of them who guarded against it, but will, leave the unjust kneeling there, because of their unjustness".

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq was asked about God's words, mighty and sublime is He, *Does not man remember that We created him before, when he was nothing?* He replied: Neither decreed nor written.[1]

(2) al-Ṣādiq was asked about, *Does not man remember …* He replied: He was neither in a Book nor knowledge.[2]

Author's comment: The two hadiths mean that he (man) was neither in a Book nor in knowledge of the books of overturning making to pass [the matters of providence]. God then made it to pass that man would be when He wanted him to come to existence. As for the Guarded Tablet, nothing escapes it as confirmed by direct Qur'anic text.

(3) *Tafsīr*, al-Qummī says regarding God's words, *then shall We certainly cause them to be present around hell* (*jithiyyan*): It means: "On their knees".

(4) al-Ṣādiq said regarding (God's words), *And there is not one of you but shall come to it*: Have you not heard the man say: *Waradnā Banī Fulān*, we came upon the sons of so-and-so [or their

1 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration back to Mālik al-Juhnī

2 *Al-Maḥāsin* says via a chain of narration back to Hamrān

territories], it means, the coming upon without entry.[1]

(5) God's Messenger said about, *And there is not one of you but shall come to it*: People come to Hell then go out in accordance with their deeds—the first of them [will be] like a flash of lightning followed by [those] like the blowing of the wind, then like the coming of a horse, then like someone mounted, then like a sprinting man, then like a walking man.[2]

(6) Abū Sumayya said: We disagreed over *wurūd*—some people said: It means: No believer enters it. Others said: They all enter it, then God delivers those who guarded against evil. Thereafter I saw Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh and so I asked him. He pointed with his fingers to his ears and said: (A vow of) silence, if I did not hear God's Messenger say: *Wurūd* means entering. No good person or sinner will remain who does not enter it, but it will be a comfort and peace to the believers as it was to Abraham, so much so that the fire [or he said, the Hellfire] will let out its cries from the cold that befalls it. God will then deliver those who guarded against evil and leave the unjust therein on their knees.[3]

Author's comment: The above oral tradition is aligned with the exegesis. However, its chain of narration is weak because the narrators are unknown.

(7) [*Majmaʿ al-bayān*] also says: A Prophetic hadith (*marfūʿ*) on the authority of Yaʿlā b. Munabbih says that God's Messenger said: The Hellfire says to the believer on the Day of Resurrection: Pass, believer, for your light has extinguished my flame.

(8) It is narrated that the Prophet was asked about the meaning [of the verses 68 to 71] and so he said: Verily God will make the Hellfire like congealed fat and gather all creation above it. The caller will then call out: Take your companions and leave mine. I swear by Him in whose Hand rests my soul, verily it knows its

1 *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī via its chain of narration on the authority of al-Ḥusayn b. Abū l-ʿAlāʾ

2 *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of al-Suddī from al-Hamadānī from ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd

3 *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ Ghālib b. Sulaymān on the authority of Kathīr b. Ziyād

companions better than a mother knows her own child.

Author's comment: The last four oral traditions are narrated in al-*Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of several authors of seminary books and [hadith] compilations, except that in the copy of *al-Durr al-manthūr* which we have, the third oral tradition does not say: *Wurūd* means entering (*dukhūl*).

(9) ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr said: When Ibn Rawāḥa wanted to set off for the land of Muʾta in the Levant, the Muslims came to him to bid him farewell and so he started crying. He then said: I swear by God I do not have love for the world or longing for any of you. Nevertheless, I heard God's Messenger recite this verse: *And there is not one of you but shall come to it; this is an unavoidable decree of your Lord*. I realized that I am coming upon Hell and do not know by what means I will come out of it after entering it.[1]

Author's comment: The reader should know that the apparent meaning of a number of the above oral traditions is that people's *wurūd* with regard to the Hellfire means their passing by it. Thus, it can apply to the oral traditions about the *ṣirāṭ* (path); [these traditions] say that it is a bridge stretching over the Hellfire which both good people and sinners are commanded to cross over. The good cross over but sinners fall in. Al-Ṣadūq says in *al-Iʿtiqādāt* that the verse should be construed as such.

(10) *Majmaʿ al-bayān* says: It is claimed that coming to the Hellfire means what some oral traditions say, namely that God only sends someone to Heaven after making him look down on the Hellfire and the punishment in it to realize the completeness of the favor bestowed upon him by God and the perfection of His favor and beneficence to him. He will be even happier with and more joyful over Heaven and its comfort. He also does not send anyone to Hell until He has shown him Heaven and the various comforts and rewards therein to add to his punishment and the regret he will feel over the Heaven and comfort he has missed out on.

Discussion on the Permissibility and Impermissibility of Actions for God.

It was explained above [Ar. and Eng. vol. 1], in the Qur'anic study at

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Abū Naʿīm in *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*

the end of the verse: *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors* (2:26), that God has absolute ownership of everything, that is, He owns everything absolutely, [He is] unrestricted by situation, time, and [there is] no condition imposed upon [Him]. Everything is owned by Him in every respect including its essence and anything related to it.

He can effectuate His will in and with whatever He pleases without justifying any repugnance or condemnation or reprehensibility from the part of the intellect or other. This is because repugnance or condemnation for an action are only merited by the actor if they did what they are not entitled to do based on the dictates of the intellect or law or an accepted tradition. However, in the case that the actor effectuated an action to which they are entitled and over which they have ownership, no repugnance or condemnation or accusation can be directed towards them. In human society, [for example,] absolute ownership and freedom do not exist because they violate the definition of society and resource sharing. In this context, everything owned is bound by ownership. The violation of these bounds merits condemnation and repugnance, whereas the adherence to them deserves praise and appreciation.

The opposite is true of His ownership because it is absolute, unbounded and unlimited as evidenced by all the Qur'anic verses about divine ownership. More so, this is clearly inferred by the verses that assert the exclusive monopoly of God over rulership and law-making and confirm the dominion of His decree over all things. Indeed, had it not been for the expanse of His sovereignty and vastness of His power over all things, His command could not take effect in all things and His decree would not hold in every event.

Those who propose that God's ownership is limited by what the dictates of the intellect deem repugnant support their claim with the observation that if the master of a slave punishes his slave with a punishment unacceptable to the intellect, the master will merit condemnation and the people of reason will find his act to be repugnant. Note that the conclusion they deduced was by way of observing what is similar to the matter of discussion.

However, the ownership we are in the course of confirming for God is His legislative ownership (*mulk tashrīʿī*). His legislative ownership describes the fact that existence and being of all things go back to Him.

In turn, His existential ownership (*mulk takwīnī*) describes the reality that He is the source of existence of all things. Not a single thing or entity is outside God existential ownership. Based on this, how can God's existential ownership truly stand in anything without bringing rise to a legislative ownership and God-given right [or responsibility]? Yes, the only way this could be is if we are speaking of what falls under nihilistic behavior (*ʿanāwīn ʿadamiyyah*) which is not attributed to [God's direct] creation. For example, the committing of sins is the [direct] action of man. This type of nihilistic behavior is sourced (1) in the defection from God's command, (2) in the neglect of one's welfare and (3) in the abandonment of the dictates of wisdom. None of these characteristics can be manifested in an action that is [directly] attributable to Him. This is something which the reader should think about carefully.

It follows on logically from this discussion that no one else can impose anything upon Him, forbid Him from anything or make anything lawful to Him—in short give Him legal duties. Similarly it is impossible for anything to have any effect on Him. Accepting, that would mean His being owned by another. It would imply that He is subject to the dominion of another such that He is duty-bound by them and owned in His Essence by them. This, of course, is impossible.

The question is: What does govern Him? Who dominates Him by imposing duties on Him?

If, we say hypothetically, it's the intellect that judges by itself and decrees for itself then one could question the intellect's possession of this judgment and ruling. This is because we know that the intellect relies in its conclusions on matters external to itself including the determination and consideration of the benefits and detriments surrounding a particular action. Hence, the intellect is not a totally independent judge by itself. Instead, it must resort to what is external to it to make its judgement.

Another hypothesis is to say that His Actions are governed by certain welfare and considerations that the intellect can perceive. For example, a certain welfare dictates that God should be Just in His rule and that He should not be oppressive to His servants. In turn, the intellect, after looking into this matter [and seeing that justice is beneficial], rules that God should uphold justice and refrain from injustice, or it rules that justice is good and injustice is evil.

From here, there are two possibilities: 1) This perceived good is a

mental construct, made up by the intellect without corresponding to any external reality. However, this conclusion is tantamount to claiming that the intellect draws its conclusions by itself without relying on anything external to itself, which we just proved to be false. 2) The good perceived by the intellect is not merely a mental construct but a reality existing externally. If so, then it will without a doubt be a contingent being that is caused by the Necessary Being. Its existence goes back to Him, it is sustained by Him, and it is ultimately one of His Actions.

The matter boils down to the fact that some of His actions, when carried out, prevent the carrying out of another set of actions. Further, He has shown the intellect how to judge that a given action is incumbent upon Him and another is prohibited. In other words, it comes down to the fact that He, knowing the order of creation, chooses to carry out an action over another: an action that holds what is good and beneficial is chosen over another that is devoid of it. This is based on the creation and existential properties of things. In turn, He has shown the intellect how to derive from what is beneficial that the action that He chose, justice, for example, is incumbent upon Him. Or if you like, you can say: He decreed with the language of the intellect that a given action is incumbent upon Him. In a nutshell, the source of incumbency goes back to none other than Him. He is the One who makes anything incumbent upon Himself.

The following has become clear from the above analysis:

First: He has absolute ownership. He is not bound to any set of actions to the exclusion of others. He can do whatever He pleases and decree whatever He wants. As He says: *The great doer of what He will* (85;16)*; And God pronounces a doom—there is no repeller of His decree* (13:41).

It is the just that, being that, during the process of our guidance, He communicated to us at the level of our intellect and being that He assumed the position of divine legislation, He has imposed certain things upon Himself and prohibited Himself from doing others. He has deemed certain things to be good practice for Him, for example, fairness and beneficence just as He has deemed them to be good for us. He has deemed certain things, for example, unfairness and aggression to be bad practice for Him just as He has deemed them to be bad for us.

What it means for Him to be a lawmaker issuing commands and prohibitions is that He has ordained our existence to be in a perfect system tied to a set of goals that are tantamount to our happiness and that guarantee

our welfare during our life on earth and the Hereafter. These set of goals are called interests (*maṣāliḥ*). In so doing, God has orchestrated the causes of our existence and the living apparatuses within us in such a way that befits only a particular way of life characterized by actions that best suit none other than our existential interests. The context of existence, the preset systems, the situations and the circumstances surrounding us all propel us towards existential interests. Our existential interests call us to the performance of specific actions that are harmonious with them and drive us to lead a life that brings us to existential perfection and felicity. You can say, if you wish, that our existential interests invite us to laws and practices that bring, to their adherents, the goodness of this world and the next. These laws are acclaimed by inherent nature (*fiṭra*) and are taught by Heavenly revelation in the form of divine legislation (Sharia). Being that this legislation goes back to Him, its commandments are His, its prohibitions are His and its laws are His. It deems certain actions as always praiseworthy, for example, justice. He holds Himself to justice in His actions just as He holds us to it in our actions. Similarly, this divine legislation deems other actions as always repugnant and atrocious, for example, injustice. He refused for His actions to be stained with injustice just as He will not accept that our actions will be stained by it.

Consequently, there is no harm in something being made legally incumbent upon God provided it is He who is imposing the law upon Himself. In reality, these formulations are only mental constructs to aid our rational conception of the reality. The reality of the matter is more precisely that. The deeper reality that lies behind our mental conceptions is that it is part of His existential custom (*sunna takwiniyya*) to want and do things which when presented to the intellect will be classified as just. It is also part of His existential custom that the actions that do not emanate from Him when presented to the intellect are classified as unjust. Understand this.

Second: This is the definition of the legislative obligation (*al-wujūb al-tashrīʿī*). There is also another kind of obligation [that God has taken upon Himself] and it is an existential obligation (*al-wujūb takwīnī*). The legislative obligation is sourced in the existential obligation. The latter is defined by the necessity for all phenomena to be unmistakably the effect of their causes as part of the general order. It is from this necessity that we deduce the concept of justice (*al-ʿadl*).

The matter has confused many researchers, causing them to claim that the legislative obligation is existential and defined it such that it releases Him by obligation, making Him as obliged and capable to carry out the repugnant as He is to refrain from it. However, He never carries out the repugnant. More so, abstaining from committing the repugnant is a necessity for Him by virtue of His Wisdom, despite being possible for Him by virtue of His Power. This necessity is a real necessity just like it is necessary for us to state that one is necessarily half of two. It is not a mentally constructed necessity. In fact, it is considered amongst the *ʾawāmir al-mawlawiyyah*.

The confusion is clear because if refraining from doing evil is possible by virtue of His Power and His Power is His very Essence, then it is also possible in relation to His Essence. Then, if the Attribute of Wisdom is also His very Essence, refraining from doing evil would be simultaneously both necessary and possible in relation to His Essence which is contradictory. On the other hand, if the attribute of wisdom is other than His Essence, then if it is an entity in its own right (*amr ʿaynī*) that has made refraining from carrying out the repugnant necessary to His Essence after it was possible implying that a possible being has effected change on the Necessary Being, which is another contradiction. In fact, the reason why the [proponents of this hypothesis] turn away from the belief in legislative obligation (*al-wujūb al-tashrīʿī*) to the belief in existential obligation (*al-wujūb al-takwīnī*) is to avoid falling into the pitfall of claiming rule by way of command and prohibition of anything other than God over Himself. If [His obligation to refrain from the repugnant or his legislative obligation] is a matter than can be drawn from His Essence, we fall into the first said contradiction. On the other hand, if his legislative obligation is drawn from other than His Essence, we fall into the second said contradiction. However the real judgement over the validity of a deduced matter is dependent on the manner of its deduction.

The error in the above reasoning stems from considering an action necessary with relation to His Essence only after considering Wisdom with it. However, if we take His Essence as a complete cause for the necessity of an action, that action must be deemed necessary, not possible, to His Essence whether we consider His Essence together with His Wisdom or not. If we take His Essence to be a part of the complete cause for the necessity of an action such that other prerequisites must also be realized

for the action to become necessary, then the action becomes a possible action in relation to His Essence and not a necessary one. Finally, it is only we take the complete cause of an action to be the aggregation of His Essence with other than His Essence, that we can have a necessary relationship and not a possible one.

Third: When we say: "He has to do such-and-such", or: "Such-and-such is not permissible for Him", it is a rational ruling. Here, reason judges and makes verdicts as opposed to simply perceiving and understanding that any rational verdict passed is merely a mental construct and not a reality in its own right verbalized by the mind as a kind of narrative, being that, as some have said, it is not for reason to judge but only to perceive.

That is because the reason under discussion here is practical reason which concerns what should be and what should not be and what is permissible and what is not permissible. All meanings such as these are mental conceptions with no reality outside the realm of mental grasping and perception. Hence, this rational assuredness is in essence the workings of reason alone and explains the reality of rational judgement (*ḥukm*) and verdict (*qadāʿ*).

As for theoretical reason, which is concerned with the conceptualization (*taṣawur*) and assertion (*taṣdīq*) of realities and not mental constructs, its deductive faculties stand in their own right independently of reason. When these deductive faculties perceive or grasp a given truth, reason has but to accept and recount it. This is pure perception (*idrāk*) without judgement (*hukm*) or verdict (*qadāʿ*).

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Verses 73-80

This is the second part of the words attributed to the unbelievers. It is their response to the Prophetic invitation where they claim that it does not call to anything that will better the lives of the believers in any way. They advanced that if the Prophetic call was of any substance it would draw to them the glamour of this life which brings with it the joy of life including magnificent buildings, precious possessions, beauty and adornment. All the while, whereas they took the position of disbelief, they continue, the goods of this world that are at their disposal far exceed the material possessions of the believers. During this time, the believers had been stricken with frailty of condition, loss of wealth and harsh circumstances. In light of this context, the disbelievers proclaimed that their disbelief was the truth and should be chosen over the faith held by the believers. God answers them by saying: *And how many … have We destroyed …* (19:74), *Say: As for him who remains in error …* (19:75).

He then proceeded to recount the reality of some of those who were misled by the said discourse.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا ﴿٧٣﴾

(19:73) ***And when Our clear communications are recited to them, those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Which of the two parties is best in abiding*** **(maqāman)** ***and best in assembly*** **(nadiyyan)?**

Maqām is the adverbial noun of place derived from the gerund *qiyām* (standing) and it signifies abode. A *nadiyy* is a gathering. Some have said that it means specifically a consultative assembly.

The clause, *those who disbelieve say to those who believe* means that they spoke to them. [Some] claim that the *lām* (to) in *lil-mu'minīn*, to those who believe, is communicative. Alternatively, [some] claim that the *lām* is causal, meaning, so that or for the sake of. In other words, it is as if the verse read: "they said for the sake of those who believe, meaning

for the sake of calling them to error and diverting from the path of faith". Notwithstanding, the first interpretation fits the context better. Similarly, it is more befitting to interpret the objective personal pronoun them (*ʿalayhim*) as referring back to all people as a superset that includes disbelievers. Since believers are the group of people other than the disbelievers, the segment "those who disbelieve say" becomes an explicit reference to one of the subgroups implied by the superset, them (*ʿalayhim*).

The word "which" (*ayy*) in the phrase, *which of the two parties is best in abiding and best in assembly?* is a question in rhetorical form. The two parties are the unbelievers and the believers. The intent of the disbelievers was to assert their view that they live under superior living conditions and enjoy better social surroundings than the believers who were mostly slaves and under poverty. However, they presented their claim as a rhetorical question. To further make their point, they metonymically alluded to believers and the disbelievers as the two parties to give the impression that the believers knew very well what they are referring to and that, if asked, the believers would confirm their claim without hesitation or doubt.

In synthesis, it is as if the verse read as: "And when Our clearly probative and substantiating communications that leave no doubt are recited to the people, unbelievers and believers, the disbelieving party will say to the believing party: Which of these two parties is better in terms of living conditions and better in terms of company?" Clearly, the disbelievers, they believe. This necessarily follows, they continue, that they are the felicitous by virtue of their path and way of life being that there is no happiness beyond the enjoyment of the material goods of this worldly life. Thus, they conclude, it is they who are in the right.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثَاثًا وَرِئْيًا ﴿٧٤﴾

(19:74) ***And how many of the generations*** **(qarn)** ***have We destroyed before them who were better in respect of goods*** **(athāthan)** ***and outward appearance*** **(riʾyan)**!

Qarn are equals or likes that live in the same age or era of time. *Athāth* means household chattels. It is said that it cannot describe but the numerous and has no singular form to refer to a single chattel. *Riʾy* means that part of the outward appearance that was seen. It is narrated in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* that some have said that: It is a noun referring to that which is

made apparent. However it is not considered a verbal noun. The verbal nouns are *raʾy* (view; opinion) and *ruʾya* (vision). This is indicated by: … *whom they saw* (yarawnahum) *twice as many as themselves with the sight of the eye* (raʾy al-ʿayn) (3:13).

Thus *raʾy* refers to the act. It is a verbal noun that means [the act of seeing into something or forming an opinion]. On the other hand, *riʾy* refers to the object. It means that which is seen. Examples of this construct can be seen in *taḥn* (grinding) *tiḥn* (that which is ground), *saqy* (watering), *siqy* (that which is watered), *ramy* (throwing) and *rimy* (that which is thrown).

The unbelievers supported their proclamation of the superiority of their way of life and thus the invalidity of the Prophetic call adopted by the believers, based on the fact that they enjoyed superior living conditions and social surroundings, forgetting that the human being is destined for everlasting eternal life and that his felicity lies therein. The scant days lived in this world are worthless in comparison to that which is everlasting and can never be a substitute for it. More so, these worldly pleasures do not guarantee happiness to the human being nor provide him with any protection from God's Wrath should it befall him. Indeed, the transgressors are never far or safe from God's Wrath and Anger, and there is no enjoyment to a life threatened with doom nor is there fulfilment in any comfort that is conducive to divine retribution and personal despair.

The divine rebuttal to the discourse of the disbelievers is alluded to in the clause, *And how many of the generations have We destroyed before them*. It is apparent that the sentence is circumstantial (*ḥāliyya*). *Kam* (how) in "how many … have We destroyed" is enunciative and not interrogative. It is as if the verse means: "Mocking the believers, they utter this baseless objection: 'We enjoy superior living conditions and social surroundings that you!' However, the truth of the matter is that We have destroyed many generations before them who were better off in terms of possessions and appearances".

In fact, God has recounted similar misconception being held by Pharaoh. He then followed Pharoah's haughty declarations with descriptions of his drowning and downfall: *And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people: O my people! is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And these rivers flow beneath me; do you not then see? Nay! I am better than this fellow, who is contemptible, and who can hardly speak distinctly: But why have not*

bracelets of gold been put upon him, or why have there not come with him Angels as companions? So he incited his people to levity and they obeyed him: surely they were a transgressing people. Then when they displeased Us, We inflicted retribution on them, so We drowned them all together, And We made them a precedent and example to the later generations (43:51-56).

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مَدًّا ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ إِمَّا الْعَذَابَ وَإِمَّا السَّاعَةَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَكَانًا وَأَضْعَفُ جُنْدًا ﴿٧٥﴾

(19:75) ***Say: As for him who remains in error, the Beneficent will surely prolong his respite, until they see what they were threatened with, either the punishment or the hour; then they shall know who is in more evil plight and weaker in forces.***

The word *kāna* in *man kāna fi al-ḍalāla*, literally "who was in error", expresses the disbelievers' persistence in error and not their mere falling into it. In the light of this reality, the threat is made to punish them by increasing their material provisions and luring them into deeper perdition, adding misguidance to their misguidance.

Fa l yamdud is a third person imperative form. It can be interpreted as meaning that it is "incumbent" upon the Beneficent to increase the persistent disbeliever in material abundance. The first person speaker ordered the second person to give him a command. This is tantamount to the first person speaker making the fulfilment of that command incumbent upon himself.

Madd and *imdād* mean the same thing, that is, stretching. Al-Rāghib says in his *al-Mufradāt* that *ʿimdād* is mostly used for the desirable happenings whereas *madd* is used for undesirable events. It is as if the verse is read as: "Indeed, as for the one who has become settled in error and persisted in it, metonymically referring to the disbelievers, God has made it incumbent upon Himself to increase him in the possession of the very cause of his misguidance including, by context, worldly lusters". This is to divert him from the truth until the sudden and unexpected command of God sets in, be it either punishment [in this life] or the coming of the Hour, making the truth apparent to him after he wasted all chances of benefitting from it.

Consequently, the words, *until they see what they were threatened with, either the punishment or the hour; then they shall know …* prove that this provision (*madd*) is actually abandonment in the façade of privilege. It is designed to divert the persistent disbeliever from the truth and the adherence to it by busying him with the deceptive glamour of this worldly life. In turn, the truth will only become apparent to him when it can bring him no benefit. It will be at a time when divine wrath has descended or the Final Hour has come. As He says: *But their belief was not going to profit them when they had seen Our punishment; (this is) God's law, which has indeed obtained in the matter of His servants* (40:85); *On the day when some of the signs of your Lord shall come, its faith shall not profit a soul which did not believe before, or earn good through its faith* (6:158).

The literal form (*lafz*) of the word 'man' is singular and means "him" in the verse. In terms of its meaning, man is plural and means "whoever has this quality". The use of the plural pronoun in, *they see what they were threatened with*, even though "they" refers back to "him" (man), is in conformance with man by way of its meaning. The use of the singular pronoun in "will surely prolong his respite" is in conformance with the literal form of man.

The unbelievers' previous statement—"Which of the two parties is best in abiding and best in assembly?"—is met with the response: *then they shall know who is in more evil plight and weaker in forces*.

As for the position of the disbelievers when they witness divine retribution which in its apparent meaning refers to punishment in this world, will be the position of a recipient of God's chastisement. In fact, the position of the Quraysh's elite upon whom these communications were recited was in the wells of Badr into which their bodies were thrown. As for their position when they see the Final Hour, it will be in perpetual Hell, the abode of perdition. As for the weakness of their forces it is because there is no protection for them today from God. All the numbers and gear that they had prepared for themselves will be in vain and of no consequence.

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى ۗ وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ مَرَدًّا ﴿٧٦﴾

(19:76) ***And God increases in guidance those who go aright; and ever-abiding good works are with your Lord best in recompense***

and best in yielding fruit.

Al-bāqiyāt al-ṣāliḥat describes the good deeds which remain in God's safe-keeping and elicit delightful gratitude and great reward. God has promised this in various places in the Qur'an.

Thawāb is the recompense for one's deeds. Al-Rāghib said in his *al-Mufradāt*: "The root meaning of *thawb* is the return of a thing to its original state or to the state preconceived and desired by a thought". "*Thawāb* is the recompense (*jazāʾ*) which comes back to a person for his deeds. Hence, recompense is called *thawāb*, based on the conception that they are one and the same", he continues. *Thawāb*, he completes, "is used for both good and bad. However, it is mostly used for good". *Maradd* is an adverbial noun of place (*ʾism makān*) derived from *radd* with means return. Here, *maradd* means Heaven.

The verse completes the line of reasoning that began in the previous verse. The preceding verse depicts the state of the people of error and reminds that God will prolong their respite. Meanwhile, they drift further in their delusion, diverted from the truth, their backs turned on belief, entertaining themselves with the distractions of this world until divine punishment or the Hour surprises them. In the end, the truth of the matter will be revealed to them without their benefiting from it. They are one of the two parties in the clause, "Which of the two parties is best … ?"

In turn, this verse explains how it will be for the other party—the believers. God will provide those who go aright, the believers, with further guidance. He increases them in guidance upon their guidance, granting them the success to perform the unperishing good works that earn the best recompense, lead to a final abode that is Paradise, and afford perpetual comfort. Hence, the joys of life that are with the believers which are everlasting bliss are superior to the ephemeral illusive lusters that the unbelievers possess.

There is in the clause "with your Lord" an allusion to the fact that the believers' reward and outcome is a matter of divine reckoning that never falls into fault or error.

As the reader can see, these two verses [75-76] are a second response to the unbelievers' argument, that is, "Which of the two parties is best in abiding and best in assembly?"

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِى كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالَ لَأُوتَيَنَّ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٧٧﴾

(19:77) ***Have you, then, seen him who disbelieves in Our communications and says: I shall certainly be given wealth and children?***

The context provided by the previous four verses [73–76], exposes the frail argument advanced by some of the unbelievers upon hearing the Qur'an and their attempt to refute the truth, seek to lead others astray and mock the believers. Likewise, the line of reasoning of these four verses which opens with an exclamation and deals with rhetoric similar to the preceding discourse. They conclude with an appropriate response that reveals that some people who believed in the Prophet or were considering to do so, after hearing what the unbelievers said, inclined toward them and joined them, saying, "I will be given wealth and offspring—in this world—by following the religion of polytheism". It is as if believing in God brought misery and believing in many gods brought good fortune, or so they believed. God then responded to them by saying: *Has he gained knowledge of the unseen …*

Claim: The majority say—based on the reason for the revelation narrated—that is, that the sentence, *I shall certainly be given wealth and children*, is what a man of Quraysh, who was firmly rooted in polytheism, said to Khabbāb b. al-Aratt when the latter asked him to repay a debt he owed him. With this understanding, the sentence in question would mean: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children in Heaven and repay my debt".

Reply: This does not match the context of the verses because it is well known that the polytheists did not believe in resurrection at all. Thus saying, I shall certainly be given wealth and children when I am resurrected and then repay my debt, could only have been mockingly and out of derision. However, it could not have been mockery or derision because there is no point in refuting mockery with reasoned argument, such as the explicit: *Has he gained knowledge of the unseen, or made a covenant with the Beneficent?*

Another claim: It is narrated on the authority of Abū Muslim al-Mufassir ('the Exegete') that the verse applies to everyone who has this characteristic.

Reply: This claim is similarly invalid.

The phrase, *Have you, then, seen him who disbelieves in Our communications* is an exclamation and the clause, *Have you, then, seen* (*afa raʾayt*) is exclamatory. He made it follow on logically from the sentence, *Which of the two parties is best in abiding and best in assembly?* with the

conjunction *fa* which indicates logical consequence (*fāʾ al-tafrīʿ*) because the disbelief of this speaker and what he says: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children" is of the same category as their disbelief and is based on what they said to the believers: "There is no good, happiness in life, worldly power or blessing with that lot. There is only good with the unbelievers and in their religion".

Thus it is clear that the clause, *and says: I shall certainly be given wealth and children* depicts a class from, *those who disbelieve in Our communications*. This class of disbelievers only disbelieved in God's communications thinking that it is a fortuitous, blessed path that attracts strength and power for those that choose it and provides them with goodness and happiness in this world. He swears this, and [this oath] is evidenced by the *lām* that expresses an oath (jurative) and the emphatic *nūn* in *la ūtayanna* (I swear that I shall certainly be given).

أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ أَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾

(19:78) ***Has he gained knowledge of the unseen, or made a covenant with the Beneficent?***

God responds by asserting that the line of reasoning that says: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children" by virtue of my disbelief is nothing more than conjecture about the unknown without access to any kind of knowledge. The disbeliever has not been apprised of the unseen such that he would be able to know that he will be given what he hopes for in exchange for his disbelief. He has not made any covenant with God that affords him any certainty about his claim. In essence, the negation of the disbeliever's claim is presented in the form of a rhetorical question.

كَلَّا ۚ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ﴿٧٩﴾

(19:79) ***By no means! We write down what he says, and We will lengthen to him the length of the chastisement.***

Kallā which literally means 'no' acts as word of deterrence and rebuke. The end of the verse is an indication that God is using it to answer the speaker's line of reasoning that he would be given wealth and children on account of denying God's communications. In sum, the effect of the adherence to this line of reasoning is not being given wealth and children as it may seem. The bestowal of wealth and children actually has different

causes. Instead, the consequence of adherence to this line of reasoning is lengthened chastisement on account of his disbelief and conjecture. Thus what the speaker was really evoking by his discourse was prolonged punishment, one following the other. That outcome is the true consequence of his words and not the bestowal of wealth and children. It is as if it was said: "We will record what he says and bring to pass its outcome: prolonged punishment". The verse is similar to: *Then let him summon his council, We too would summon the braves of the army* (96:17-18).

Thus, it is clear that the most likely meaning of writing down his deeds is letting them take root in the heart of the disbeliever so that their consequence can take effect, and not writing it on his scroll of deeds for him to be held to account for it on the Day of Resurrection, as some leading exegetes have interpreted it. This is supported by the fact that if we are to interpret, *We write down what he says* as being the writing of his words on his scroll of deeds, the subsequent words, *And We will inherit of him what he says*, would imply purposeless repetition.

وَنَرِثُهُ مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ﴿٨٠﴾

(19:80) *And We will inherit of him what he says, and he shall come to Us alone.*

The concept of 'the inheritance of his words' is employed to mean that when he will die and perish, he will leave behind the sin of what he had said and adhered to: "I will be given wealth and children on account of my disbelief". This sin is bound to him just as wealth is bound to a person. Therefore, it becomes the custody of God after his death just like his wealth that He inherited after him. Hence, there is an elegant metaphor (*istiʿāra*) in these words.

The words, *and he shall come to Us alone* mean that he shall be on his own without anything to help him or to rely on as he imagines. Thus the verse means: "He will come to Him alone, with just what he said, which We recorded against him. We will hold him to account for what he said and lengthen for him the duration of the chastisement".

Interpreting, *I shall certainly be given wealth and children* (verse 77) as being given wealth and children in this world dictates this explanation. However, if it is interpreted the way the majority do, that is, as being given them (that is, wealth and children) in the Hereafter, the verses 78-80 have

an alternative interpretation.

The verses begin with an exclamation about an individual who disbelieved in His communications, namely as ʿĀs b. Wāʾil or Walīd b. al-Mughīra, but still said: "I swear that when I am resurrected, I will be given wealth and children in Heaven". Next, the verses express a response to him that says: "Has he looked at the Guarded Tablet or made a covenant with the Beneficent by saying that there is no god but God such that he should enter Heaven?" Or alternatively, based on the interpretation of some exegetes, it was said: "Has he offered good works? Certainly not!" "The matter is not as he has claimed", the verses continue, "We shall write down what he says by commanding the record keepers to record it on the scroll of his deeds, lengthen for him the duration of the chastisement and inherit of him what he is referring to, that is, the wealth and children he has, by causing him to perish and revoking his ownership. He will come to us, that is, he will come to the Hereafter alone without any wealth, children, gear or numbers".

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq said regarding His words: *Have you, then, seen him who disbelieves in Our communications and says: I shall certainly be given wealth and children?*: It means al-ʿĀs b. Wāʾil b. Hishām al-Qarashī later al-Sahmī. He was a known mocker and sceptic [of the Prophetic message]. Al-ʿĀs b. Wāʾil was indebted to Khabbāb b. al-Aratt and so [the latter] came to him to demand repayment. Al-ʿĀs then said to him: "Do you not claim that there is gold, silver and silk in Heaven?" He replied, "Yes". He continued, "Then the time for what is between me and you is in Heaven. I swear by God, I will be given better there than what I have been given in this world".[1]

(2) Khabbāb b. al-Aratt said: I was a blacksmith and al-ʿĀs b. Wāʾil was indebted to me. I went to him to demand repayment but he said: "No, by God, I will not pay you until you disbelieve in Muḥammad". I replied: "No, by God, I will not disbelieve in Muḥammad till you die and are resurrected". He said: "Verily, when I die and am resurrected, you will come to me and I will

1 *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī quoting Abū l-Jārūd's oral tradition

have wealth and children. I'll then give it to you". Thereafter, God revealed:

Have you, then, seen him who disbelieves in Our communications … and he shall come to Us alone. (verses 77–80).[1]

Author's comment: Something similar to it is narrated on the authority of al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Khabbāb and also on the authority of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr on the authority of al-Ḥasan on the authority of one of the Companions of God's Messenger's , without mentioning Khabbāb by name. It is also narrated on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās on the authority of a number of Companions.

It was stated above that the narrations do not fit the line of meaning of the verses because the narrations explicitly state that the words were uttered by al-ʿĀs b. Wāʾil by way of sarcastic derision.

Furthermore, incontrovertible evidence from hadith also supports the view that the polytheists did not believe in resurrection and revivification (*al-baʿth wa al-nushūr*). Next, the verses begin refuting what was said with reasoned argument. Had it been mockery—not meant in earnest—there would have been no point in reasoned argument. This is because reasoned argument is only appropriate in response to what is said in earnest—not that which is said by way of mockery. Thus the oral traditions which explicitly state that it was said in mockery do not fit the verse.

First point: If we consider the unlikely interpretation that, *I shall certainly be given wealth and children* is construed as reproaching Khabbāb and holding him to his own beliefs and not as mockery, there would have been no reason to refer to children along with wealth. It would have been sufficient to say: "I shall certainly be given wealth". Furthermore, some of these oral traditions say that he told Khabbāb: "You claim that you will be brought back to wealth and children". However, no early Muslims are ever known to have said that there is multiplication and procreation in Heaven, nor is there any reference to it in the Qur'an.

Second point: There would be no reason to swear and emphasize so strongly with an expression like *laʾūtayanna* if the statement is expressed

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* citing Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Bayhaqī in Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān, and Ibn Mardawayh.

with intent of scolding Khabbāb and holding him to his belief.

Third point: The lack of qualifier to "I shall certainly be given" with either "in Heaven" or "in the Hereafter" is not to dispel any confusion for a point that is already very clear.

Fourth point: The Words, *By no means! We write down what he says, and We will lengthen to him the length of the chastisement …*(79–80) alone would be an appropriate response and refutation. *Has he gained knowledge of the unseen, or made a covenant with the Beneficent* does not answer it at all [if we accept that al-ʿĀs b. Wā'il was solely reproaching Khabbāb and holding him to his beliefs]. This is because reproaching an opponent and holding them to their belief does not necessitate one's adherence to these beliefs such that one needs to verify them. On the contrary, most times, one partially concurs and partially disagrees with the opponents beliefs. Instead, reproaching an opponent and holding them to their belief only necessitates the opponent's full adherence to it and its prerequisites.

The reader should note that there are oral traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams—the People of the Household—about the segment of the verse, *and ever-abiding good works …* They were referred to in Ar. vol. 13[1] of this book, in the discussion of the relevant oral traditions at the end of verse 46 of Sūrah al-Kahf [The Cave].

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1 Eng. vol. 26

Verses 81-96

This is the third part of what is attributed to them [the unbelievers], namely their associating partners with God by believing in other gods and saying, "God has taken to Himself a son", a claim of which He is absolved. In addition, it contains the response to these allegations.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾

(19:81) ***And they have taken gods besides God, that they should be to them a source of strength;***

These "gods" are Angels, jinns, holy people and tyrannical rulers and kings based on the belief that the possession of rulership implied a kind of celestial sanctity. For them, being, *a source of strength* means their being intercessors who could get them closer to God through their intercession. With this, they believed that they could hold greater strength in this world, drawing good to themselves and casting away evil. Anyone who interprets their being a source of strength to them as being their intercessors in the Hereafter has overlooked the fact that polytheists do not believe in resurrection.

كَلَّا ۚ سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ﴿٨٢﴾

(19:82) ***By no means! They shall soon reject their worship, and they shall be adversaries* (ḍiddan)** ***to them.***

Lexically, a *ḍidd* is an opposite of something that can never be joined or combined with it.

According to al-Akhfash, *al-ḍidd*—like *rasūl* (Messenger) and *ʿaduww* (enemy)—can be used to refer to the singular or the plural. However, some commentators do not accept that. The use of *ḍidd*, which is singular, to refer to the "gods", which is plural is to communicate that there will come a time when these beings taken as "gods" will become unanimous in their enmity towards those who worshiped them and in their denouncement of their worship as though they we were a single body. In this way, referring to them in the singular form is appropriate.

It is apparent from the context that the two pronouns in, *they shall soon reject* and, *they shall be* refer to those taken as gods. The two pronouns in *their worship* and, *to them* refer to the polytheists who took these beings as objects of worship. It means: "Those taken as gods will renounce the polytheists. Instead of being on their side, they will become their adversaries. Had they really been a source of strength to them, they would always remain firm in that". He said something similar in: *And when those who are unjust shall see the chastisement, it shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be (given) respite. And when those who associate (others with God) shall see their associate-gods, they shall say: Our Lord, these are our associate-gods on whom we called besides You. But they will give them back the reply: Most surely you are liars* (16:85-86).

Even clearer than that are His words: … *and those whom you call upon besides Him do not control a straw. If you call on them they will not hear your call, and even if they could hear they would not answer you; and on the resurrection day they will deny your associating them (with God)* (35:13-14).

It may be possible to apply the opposite interpretation to the verse under discussion, that is, the polytheists will deny worshiping other gods and will be adversaries to those gods, as in: *Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say: By God, our Lord, we were not polytheists* (6:23).

This is an unlikely interpretation because the apparent line of reasoning places adversaries as the diametric opposite of a source of strength in the preceding verse. A source of strength comes as a description to those being deified and not the polytheists. Accordingly, and with attention to the specific ordering of pronouns in the verses, it is those being deified and described as *ḍiddan* (the adversaries) that will denounce the polytheists' worship of them. Furthermore, if the verses were to express that the polytheists will denounce their deities, the appropriate turn of phrase would have been to say: "*Sa yakfurūn bihim*, they will disbelieve in them". Similarly, to express disbelief in God one says: *kufr billāh*, literally meaning disbelieving in God. As for the expression *kufr bi ʿibādati [A] llah*, literally meaning denying the worshiping of God, it is not a proper way of expressing disbelief in God [in Arabic].

The rejection on the Day of Resurrection by those being deified of the polytheists' worship of them depicts how the truth of the matter will become apparent on that day. In fact, Resurrection Day is characterized by

manifesting pre-existing truths to all people and not causing their occurrence. Hence, if those being deified did not reject being made into objects of worship in this world and were not adversaries to those who worshiped them and only did so for the first time on the Day of Resurrection, the argument raised in the verse would be deficient. Ponder on this.

On the basis of this interpretation, *do you not see …* follows on consequentially from, *by no means! They shall soon reject their worship …*

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ أَزًّا ﴿٨٣﴾

(19:83) ***Do you not see that We have sent the Satans against the unbelievers, inciting them by incitement?***

The words *azz* and *hazz* means the same thing, that is, to cause to move vigorously and to disturb. It means the devils were inciting them towards evil and corruption and encouraging them to follow falsehood, leading them astray by shaking them away from resoluteness and steadfastness on the truth.

There is no harm in attributing the dispatch of the devils to Him , since it is by way of a punishment for the unbelievers' rejection of the truth. Only then, God punished them by increasing their disbelief and error. The words "against the unbelievers" are evidence of that. If it meant a preemptive divine misguidance it would have said: "against them"—using a pronoun, them, instead of a noun, unbelievers.

The verse beginning with, *Do you not see…*, calls to witness the supporting evidence that reinforces the assertion of the previous verse that those they deified were actually their adversaries. The devils inciting them towards evil, corruption, and pursuit of falsehood is out of adversarial enmity. The Satans—who are of the jinn—are some of their false gods. If these deified beings were not adversaries to the disbelievers they would not invite them to wherein lies their doom and their wretchedness.

Thus, the verse is equivalent to saying: "Those gods whom you reckon to be a source of strength for you are actually your adversaries. Confirmation of that lies in the fact that the Satans—who are some of their gods—incite them officiously toward their misfortune". Nevertheless, the devils do not have free rein. On the contrary, it is with God's permission and it has been classified as 'sending' (*ʾirsāl*). Hence, this verse is linked to the previous one, as is evident.

The author of *Ruḥ al-maʿānī* construes this verse as being part of a logical whole starting from, *And says man: What! when I am dead shall I truly be brought forth alive?* up to, *and they shall be adversaries to them*. He goes to great lengths to explain how these verses are part of a single logical whole without avail. What he proposed, corrupts the line of reasoning of the verses and the link between the verses subsequent to this one and those preceding it.

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٨٤﴾

(19:84) ***Therefore be not in haste against them, We only number out to them a number (of days).***

The word ʿ*add* means counting. In addition, ʿ*add* also exhausts and consumes that which it counts. With this understanding God means that He is extinguishing their lives and arriving at their final breaths. It is as if the total sum of their breaths is stored with God and He extinguishes their lives by sending them each of their breaths one after the other until they run out and announce their appointed day. The length of a person's life is really the length of time over which he is tried and tested—as we are told by: *Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in works* (18:7).

Hence, what is really being enumerated are the deeds recorded on the scroll of a person's life. In turn, these deeds shape the edifice of their eternal afterlife and construct the afterlife suitable for him there, be it one of comforts or punishments. Just as a person's body is formed by the fetus remaining in the womb for its term, so too, through the time a person remains in this world, his soul (*nafs*) takes its form. In this way God records what has been written [for his servant] of divine bounties and realizes it.

Thus a person should not wish for a swift death for:

(1) A wicked unbeliever because the length of his life is time to number his evil deeds to hold him to account for and punish him for them, or,

(2) A good believer because the length of his life is time to number his good deeds so that he can be rewarded and blessed for performing them.

The verse does not place any restriction on the counting—even though

at first glance it may appear to refer just to numbering a person's breaths or days.

Whatever the case may be, therefore, *be not in haste against them* follows on consequentially from what precedes it and, *We only number out* is the reason for it—it is in reality the reason for the delay. In sum, it means: "Being that they reap no benefit from adopting their gods, that they and their gods will eventually come to Us , that they cannot escape Our authority, and they cannot travel their path without Our permission, [therefore,]do not hasten to seize or judge them and do not be troubled by any delay in that. We are just counting their breaths or deeds thoroughly".

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَٰنِ وَفْدًا ﴿٨٥﴾

(19:85) ***The day on which We will gather those who fear (God) to the Beneficent to receive honors.***

A *wafd* is a delegation of people who come to visit, to fulfill a request or the like. They can only be called a *wafd* if they are mounted. *Wafd* is plural. The singular is *wāfid*. It may be possible to infer from, *to the Beneficent* in this verse being made the opposite of, *to Hell* in the next verse that their being gathered to the Beneficent means their being gathered in Heaven. The only reason it is referred to as being gathered to the Beneficent is because Heaven is the station of nearness to Him . Thus being gathered in Heaven is being gathered near Him. The meaning of the verse is clear.

وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا ﴿٨٦﴾

(19:86) ***And We will drive the guilty to hell thirsty.***

The word *wird* has been interpreted as thirst. It is as if it is derived from *wurūd al-mā*ʾ that is, heading for water to drink. Since one only goes to drink when they are thirsty, *wird* became a metonymy for thirst. Describing those driven to Hell as the guilty communicates the cause of their end. Similarly, those gathered to the Beneficent in the previous verse are classified as those who fear God. The meaning of the verse is clear.

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٨٧﴾

(19:87) ***They shall not control intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent.***

This is a second response to their adopting gods for intercession. It states that not everyone whose intercession humankind desires and adopts and therefore takes as a deity is an intercessor. On the contrary, intercession can only be acquired by means of a covenant with God. It is a covenant granted and upheld by only a very select few of those near His Divine Presence. He says: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth and they know (him)* (43:86).

Claims: Some exegetes have given different interpretations that take the verse to mean that:

(1) No one is entitled to receive intercession except for those who uphold a covenant with God. The covenant is to believe in God and attest to Prophethood.

(2) This verse refers to God's promise of granting [the right of] intercession to the Prophets, the Imams, the believers and the Angels—according to the oral traditions.

(3) It means testifying that there is no god but God and acknowledging that one has no power or strength and that God is one's only hope.

Reply: The first claim is the best and fits the context best.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَلَدًا ﴿٨٨﴾

(19:88) ***And they say: The Beneficent has taken (to Himself) a son.***

This is what the idolaters say. Even though some of their elite say that all or some of the gods are God's sons honorifically or as a mark of respect; the masses and indeed some of the elite, when teaching, say that it is literally true—in the sense of a derivation from His actual divine nature where the "son" has his "father's" essence. This is what the verse means, as evidenced by use of the word *walad* (biological son) as opposed to *ibn* (biological or adopted son). Hence, everything from the words, *there is no one in the Heavens and the earth* up to the end of verse 95 is part of the argument to refute these claims.

لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا ﴿٨٩﴾ تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ
وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٩٠﴾ أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾

(19:89-91) ***Certainly you have made an abominable assertion, the Heavens may almost be rent thereat, and the earth cleaves asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent.***

Idd means something evil and abominable. *Tafaṭṭur* means being rent asunder. *Khurūr* means falling down and *hadd* means destruction. The verses express the severity of the sin and the immensity of its consequences by likening them to something tangible. In so doing, it is saying: "You have committed an evil and abominable thing by making this assertion. The Heavens are almost rent asunder and split apart, the earth almost cleft asunder and the mountains have almost fallen apart upon the flatland because of their claim that the Beneficent has a son".

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ﴿٩٢﴾ إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَبْدًا ﴿٩٣﴾ لَقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا ﴿٩٥﴾

(19:92-95) ***And it is not worthy of the Beneficent that He should take (to Himself) a son. There is no one in the Heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent as a servant. Certainly He has a comprehensive knowledge of them and He has numbered them a (comprehensive) numbering. And every one of them will come to Him on the day of resurrection alone.***

The intended meaning of the 'coming' in, *but will come to the Beneficent as a servant* depicts the reality that everyone is moving towards Him and standing before Him while under His absolute and crude ownership. Each of them is owned by Him and has no power to bring benefit or harm or death or life or resurrection to himself. In fact, this reality is concomitant to them as long as they exist which is why 'coming' in the verse is not restricted to the resurrection, contrary to verse 95.

Having an account of them and numbering them means confirming them to be slaves. The nature of slaves is that their provisions are decided, their tasks assigned and their functions are set after they are accounted for and noted in the slave register, thus officially taking them into slavery.

Coming to God alone on the Day of Resurrection depicts the human

being's coming to Him empty-handed, without possessing anything that they seemingly used to possess in this world. In this life, it used to be said of a person that he had strength and power, wealth, children, helpers, ways, means and other. Yet, on that day, it will become clear to him, when his means are cut off, that he is alone owning nothing, that he is but a slave in the full sense of the word, that he never owned anything and will never own anything. It is the affair of the Day of Resurrection that will manifest the truths.

It is clear from the above that the proof in the verses against God's having a son is a single proof which can be summarized as follows: "Everyone [including whoever was claimed to be the son of God] in the Heavens and earth is God's slave, obedient to Him in their servitude with no existence or trace of existence apart from what is given by Him. Hence, He has taken all of them to be obedient to His command, pursuant to His Will without having any say in the matter. This is not all there is to their bondage. On the contrary, God counts and numbers them, records them as slaves, fixes each of them in their place, puts them at His disposal, and uses them as He pleases. Thus they are a witness to their own bondage. Even this is not all there is to it. Rather every one of them will come back to Him alone, without owning anything or anything accompanying him, so that the reality of their bondage becomes manifest for all to witness. If this is the way everyone in the Heavens and earth is, how can any of them be God's son and have true, divine nature derived from His essence? How can divinity and need come together?"

The fact that the existence of everything is sourced in Him alone, as implied by verse 93, is something that cannot be doubted by those for whom the existence of the Creator is an established fact, irrespective of whether they are monotheists or polytheists. The point of debate is over whether they have many objects or a single object of worship, or, many lords in the sense of custodians—even if by delegation—or a single one.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا ﴿٩٦﴾

(19:96) ***Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will the Beneficent bring about love.***

The words *wudd* and *mawadda* mean love. In this verse, He makes a beautiful promise to produce love in the hearts of those who believe and

do good deeds. He does not restrict it to love between themselves or for others or to love in this world or in the Hereafter or in Heaven. Hence, there is no reason for some exegetes to have said it only applies to Heaven and for others to have said it only applies to people in the world or for any other such restriction.

Both the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunna give reasons for the revelation and say that the verse was revealed about ʿAlī. Some narrations from Ahl al-Sunna say that it was revealed about those who migrated to Ethiopia. Others say something else, as is coming up in the discussion on the relevant oral traditions.

In any event, the general wording of the verse is intended and it is likely that it is linked to: *By no means! They shall soon deny their worshiping them, and they shall be adversaries to them* (19:81).

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Ṣādiq said regarding, *By no means! They shall soon deny their worshiping them, and they shall be adversaries to them*: The Day of Resurrection, that is, those deified and taken as gods instead of God will be their [that is, the disbelievers] adversaries on the Day of Resurrection. More so, they [that is, those being deified] will disassociate themselves from them [that is, the disbelievers] and from their worship till the Day of Resurrection.[1]

(2) *Al-Kāfī* says via its chain of narration that ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, Āl Sām's freeman, said: I asked al-Ṣādiq about God's words, Mighty and Sublime is He: *We only number out to them a number …* : He asked: What do they mean to you? I replied: Counting the days. He replied: Fathers and mothers count that. Rather, it is the number of breaths.

(3) [In] *Nahj al-balāgha*, among the sayings of Imām ʿAlī, [we find]: "A person's breaths are his steps to his appointed time [of death]. Everything counted is diminishing and everything expected is inevitable".

(4) Abū Jaʾfar Muhammad b. ʿAlī said regarding, *We only number out to them a number*: (It means) everything—even breaths.[2]

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1 *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī via its chain of narration on the authority of Abū Baṣīr.

2 Al-Durr al-manthūr cited by ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd.

Author's comment: This is the most comprehensive oral tradition. It would not be surprising if reference to breaths in the oral traditions was by way of example.

(5) al-Ṣādiq said regarding God's words, Mighty and Sublime is He: *The day on which We will gather those who fear (God) to the Beneficent wafdan*: (It means) they will be gathered riding thoroughbreds.[1]

(6) al-Ṣādiq said: ᶜAlī asked God's Messenger about the exegesis of His Words, Mighty and Sublime is He: *The day on which We will gather those who fear (God) to the Beneficent wafdan*. He replied: O ᶜAlī, a *wafd* is only ever mounted. Those are men who feared God, Mighty and Sublime is He, and so God loved them, favored upon them, was pleased with their deeds, and called them the Godwary (*al-muṭaqīn*). [The hadith continues.][2]

(7) Imām then narrates another long oral tradition in which he depicts their coming out of their graves, riding camels from Heaven, their entry into Heaven, and their enjoyment of the comforts provided there in.

(8) The Prophet said regarding the verse [*The day on which We will gather those who fear (God) to the Beneficent to receive honors*]: By God, they will not be gathered on foot or taken a taking [of captives or prisoners]. On the contrary, they will be brought on camels from Heaven, the likes of which no creature has ever seen. Their saddles will be made of gold and their reins of chrysolite. They will sit on them until they knock on Heaven's door.[3]

Author's comment: The same thing is narrated on the authority of the Prophet in a long hadith describing their riding, arriving, entering into Heaven, their settling therein, and their enjoyment of its blessings.[4] It is

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1 Al-Barqī's *al-Maḥāsin* via his chain of narration back to Ḥammād b. ᶜUthmān and others.

2 *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī via its chain of narration on the authority of ᶜAbdallāh b. Shurayk al-ᶜĀmirī.

3 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of ᶜAlī

4 On the authority of Ibn Abī Dunyā, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh via chains of narration leading back to ᶜAlī

also narrated by a number of hadith compilers on the authority of ʿAlī.

(9) Abū Baṣīr asked al-Ṣādiq about, *They shall not control intercession, save he who has made a covenant with the Beneficent*. He replied: He replied: Save he holds steadfast to the guardianship (*wilayat*) of the Commander of the Faithful and the Imams after him: it is the covenant with God. (*Al-Kāfi* via its chain of narration)

(10) The Prophet said: Whoever brings happiness to the heart of a believer makes me happy. Whoever makes me happy has made a covenant with God. [The hadith continues.][1]

(11) It is narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayra on his authority: Keeping the covenant means performing the five prayers.

There are other oral traditions narrated by both the Shia and the Sunnis. It can be inferred from all of them put together that the covenant made with God is true belief or a good deed that is conducive to the believer's salvation on the Day of Resurrection and that the oral traditions under discussion relate what should be understood as different applications of the same principle (*maṣadīq*).

The reader should also note that the above narrations are based on interpreting those who have intercession—to whom the verse refers—either as those who will benefit from intercession or to both the intercessors and those on whose behalf they intercede. As for interpreting them as intercessors [alone], the oral traditions have nothing to do with that.

(12) Abū Baṣīr asked al-Ṣādiq about His Words, mighty and sublime is He: *And they say: The Beneficent has taken (to Himself) a son*. He replied: This means when Quraysh said: Verily God, Mighty and Sublime is He, has a son and the Angels are females. Thereafter, God, Blessed and Transcendent is He, said in response to them: *Certainly you have made an abominable assertion. The Heavens may almost be rent thereat*—that is, at what they said and what they accused Him of—*and the earth cleaves asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces*—at what they said and accused Him of—*that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent*. Thereafter, God, Blessed and Transcendent is He, said: *And it is not worthy of the Beneficent that He should take (to Himself) a son. There is no one in the Heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent as*

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās.

a servant. Certainly He has comprehensive knowledge of them and He has numbered them a (comprehensive) numbering. And every one of them will come to Him on the day of resurrection alone, that is, one by one.

(13) Abū Baṣīr asked al-Ṣādiq about His Words, mighty and sublime is He: *Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will the Beneficent bring about love.* He replied: Holding to the guardianship (*wilāyah*) of the Commander of the Faithful. That is the *wud* (love) to which God refers. (*Tafsīr,* al-Qummī via its chain of narration)

(14) *Al-Kāfī* narrates the same via its chain of narration on the authority of Abū Baṣīr, also on [Imām Ṣādiq's] authority.

(15) God's Messenger told ᶜAlī: Say: O, God make a covenant for me with You, make there for me love with You and place binding devotion (*muwaddah*) for me in the breasts of the believers. Thereafter, God revealed: *Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will the Beneficent bring about love.* He said: It was revealed about ᶜAlī.[1]

(16) Ibn ᶜAbbās said: [This] was revealed about ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: *Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will God bring about love.* He said: It is love in the hearts of the believers.[2]

(17) *Majmaᶜ al-bayān* says about the (same) verse: A number of claims are made about it, including that it is exclusively about ᶜAlī. Indeed, "there is not a single believer who does not have love in his heart for ᶜAlī" as narrated on the authority of Ibn ᶜAbbās.

(18) Ibn ᶜAbbās said, al-Ṣādiq told me: God's Messenger said to ᶜAlī: Say: O, God, make me covenant with You and put love for me in the hearts of the believers. He then said both [lines] and so this verse was revealed. Something similar is narrated on the authority of Jābir b. ᶜAbdallāh. (*Tafsīr,* Abī Ḥamza al-Thimālī)

(19) *Ruḥ al-maᶜānī* says: It is clear that based on this interpretation, the verse would have to be Medinite.

Author's comment: However, the reader knows that there is absolutely

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Mardawayh and al-Daylamī on the authority of al-Barrāʾ

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn Mardawayh

no indication in any of the hadiths that the story took place in Medina.

(20) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf narrates that when he migrated to Medina he was grieved at having to part with his companions in Mecca, including Shayba b. Rubayʿa, ʿUtba b. Rubayʿa, and Umayya b. Khalaf. Thereafter, God revealed: *Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will God bring about love*.[1]

Author's comment: The hadith explicitly indicates that the verse is Medinite. This is refuted by the consensus that the entire sūrah—every single verse—is Meccan. This was stated above at the beginning of the sūrah.

(21) ʿAlī said: I asked God's Messenger what: *Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will God bring about love* means. He replied: Love in the hearts of the believers, and favored Angels. ʿAlī, verily God has given three things to a believer in that he evokes tenderness (*miqah*) and love, sweetness and veneration in the hearts of the pious.[2]

Author's comment: Tenderness (*miqah*) is love (*maḥabbah*). There are some other narrations to the same effect narrated by various Ahl al-Sunna chains based on the general wording of the verse. This does not contradict the specific circumstances in which the verse was revealed.

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Al-Ḥakīm, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mardawayh

Verses 97-98

These two verses conclude the sūrah. In them, He (God) makes reference to the descent of the essence of the Qur'an—which is too sublime to be reached by the hands of ordinary intellects or to be touched by those who have not been cleansed—to the level of remembrance through the medium of the Prophet's tongue.

It is said that the point of making it easy is so he [the Prophet] can give good news through it to His slaves who fear God and warn thereby a vehemently contentious people. He then summarizes the warning to the people by reminding them of the destruction of the generations who preceded them.

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنْذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لُدًّا ﴿٩٧﴾

(19:97) ***So We have only made it easy in your tongue that you may give good news thereby to those who fear (God) and warn thereby a vehemently contentious people.***

The word *taysīr* means making [something] easy. Hence, it can be deduced that what [that is, the Book or the Qur'an] has been made easy was previously in a state in which its recitation and understanding is difficult to understand. God has informed about this [special] state of His Book when He said: *I swear by the Book that makes things clear: Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom* (43:2-4).

Thus, He informs us that if He had kept it as it is was in His presence—and as it still is—without making it clear (*ʿarabī*) and recitable, it could never be hoped that people could understand it and it would have remained as it was, truly elevated, full of wisdom. In other words, it would remain inaccessible and untouchable such that people's understanding would never be able to reach it and their intellect would never to able to attain it.

From here, support is lent to the interpretation of "the Qur'an's having been made easy in the Prophet's tongue", as its having been revealed in the Arabic [that is, clear] tongue which was his tongue. Thus the verse

tells us that He made the Qur'an easy in the Prophet's tongue—making it easy for him to give good news and warn.

It may be claimed that "making it easy in his tongue" means making it flow along his tongue through revelation and bestowing on him divine speech with which he could give good news and warn [mankind]. Even though in itself this is a profound explanation, the first explanation—besides being supported by the previous verses and similar ones—fits and conforms more to the context provided by the other verses in the sūrah.

A vehemently contentious people means his people. *Ludd* is the plural of *aladd* derived from the word *ludad* which means contention.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا ﴿٩٨﴾

(19:98) ***And how many a generation have We destroyed before them! Do you see any one of them or hear a sound of them?***

The word *iḥsās* means sensory perception. *Rikz* means sound. It is claimed that *rikz* in essence means *ḥiss* which signifies sensory perception or specifically sound. In sum, it is as if the verse read as: "Even though they are vehemently contentious, they can never defeat God in debate. Consider how many a generation We have destroyed before them. See how they all became extinct with no trace of them to be seen and no sound of theirs to be heard".

End of Chapter

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Chapter 20

Ṭā Hā

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Verses 1-8

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

The aim of the chapter is to remind by way of warning. The admonitory, fear-inspiring verses clearly outnumber the verses which give glad tidings. It contains stories which conclude with the doom of tyrants and those who reject God's communications. It (also) incorporates clear arguments that leave no alternative for the minds but to believe in His Unity and answer the call of truth, and ultimately, (the chapter) describes, the horrors of the Hour and the stages during the resurrection which humanity will go through, the terrible state of the sinners and the loss suffered by wrongdoers. As alluded to by the context, the chapter begins with the Prophet being consoled not to tire his holy self out trying to get people to answer his call contained in the Qur'an—as it was not revealed for him to be burdened by it. On the contrary the divine revelation was to remind people, of God and His signs in the hope that their instinct of fear would be aroused and they would awaken, believe in Him and be god-fearing. The Prophet was under no obligation other than to convey the message—if they became apprehensive and remembered their Lord, it would ultimately be to their benefit. Otherwise exterminatory punishment would envelop them or they would be returned to their Lord burdened with the evil consequence of their wrongdoing and sin. Their deeds will be requited without their frustrating God with their tyranny or rejection.

The context of the verses gives the impression that the chapter is Meccan. Although, some oral traditions say that (the verse), *Bear then patiently what they say* (20:130) is Medinite. Others allege that, *And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them …* (20:131) is Medinite. However, the wording does not support

these claims. One of the gems of verses in the chapter are His Words: *God—there is no god but He; His are the very best names* (20:8).

طه ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ ﴿٢﴾

(20:1-2) ***Ṭā Hā. We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful.***

Ṭā Hā are two of the alphabetical letters with which the chapter begins, similar to other chapters that begin with letters like *Alif Lām Mīm, Alif Lām Rāʾ* and their likes. Although, matters pertaining to these letters are beyond the scope of an exegetical discussion, the meaning of the two letters (*Ṭā Hā*) has been narrated on the authority of a number of exegetes and the same will be alluded to in the discourse on the relevant oral traditions, if God pleases.

Shaqāwah (unsuccessfulness) is the opposite of *saʾādah* (happiness). Ar-Raghib says: *Shaqāwah* can be classified exactly like *saʾādah*. Just as there are two types of happiness: happiness in the hereafter and happiness in this world and the latter is of three further types: spiritual, physical and external—unsuccessfulness too has the same classification.

Some say that *shaqāʾ* is used as a synonym for *taʾab* (tiredness) for example *Shaqīt fī kadhā* (I tired myself out doing such-and-such). All *shaqāwah* is *taʾab* but not all *taʾab* is *shaqāwah*. Thus, *taʾab* is more general than *shaqāwah*. It [the verse] means: "We have not revealed the Qur'an to you to tire yourself by making the people accept it as a part of your mission".

إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٣﴾

(20:3) ***Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears.***

The word *tadhkirah* means to create remembrance in someone who has forgotten something. The inherent nature (*fiṭra*) of the human being instinctively grasps the existence of God , His Unity and necessary existence, His divinity and Lordship, the universal truth of religion, Prophethood, resurrection and the day of judgment. It is due to humanity's attachment to the earth and the preoccupation with the world's embellishments, which makes the hearts forget what was ingrained in their nature.

Presenting these truths draws humanity's attention to them and is a reminder of what they had forgotten. Obviously that means that they

had turned away from the truths. It was only referred to as forgetting, somewhat metaphorically, because both turning away from and forgetting have the same effect that is not paying attention to one's affairs. To prevent this heedlessness which causes one to follow the worldly desires, the reminder provokes one to fear and dread due to the consequence of one's actions. This will activate the soul and push it to devote itself utterly to the truth until remembrance takes its place and helps the person to adhere to the truth.

Based on the above, it is understandable why remembrance is qualified by, *him who fears*, and that this phrase refers to those who are apprehensive and whose hearts are receptive to the truth. It is such that if a reminder reaches them, fear will be roused in their hearts and they will believe. According to some views, the exception in *illā tadhkirah* (him who fears) is a discontinuous exception. It means: "We did not reveal the Qur'an to you for you to tire yourself out but instead as a reminder for someone whose disposition is to have fear and thus remember. He will then believe in God and guard against evil".

The verse by itself suggests that *tadhkirah* is an infinitive that has a subject meaning here [that is a reminder]. It would be the object of, *We have not revealed*. Likewise, *tanzīlan* in the next verse is an object [that is, that which is revealed or sent down]. It would be a description of *tadhkirah* here, which refers to the Qur'an. It means: "We did not reveal the Qur'an for you to tire yourself with it, but rather to remind the fearful of the divine word sent down from His Presence".

تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾

(20:4) *A revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high Heavens.*

ʿUlā (high) is the plural of *ʿulyā* which is the feminine of *aʿlā* (higher) like *fuḍlā* and *fuḍal* (both meaning, more meritorious). The creation of the earth and high Heavens act as a relative clause and clarification of "Who sends down the revelation", because the appropriateness of sending down (*tanzīl*) can only be achieved by having an elevated origin and low destination for this journey.

They [that is the Heavens and the earth] have been singled out for mention to the exclusion of everything else because what exists between

them serves no purpose in this context. The only point is to explain the origin and destination of the revelation as opposed to, *His is what is in the Heavens and what is in the earth and what is between them two*, which aims to demonstrate that His ownership applies to everything.

الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾

(20:5) *The Beneficent (God) is firm in power* (ʿalā al-ʿarsh istawā).

This is a theme in which the matter of Unity of Lordship is referred to, which is the core purpose of inviting and reminding and is comprised of these four verses (20:5-8) from, *The Beneficent*, to, *His are the very best names*. It was mentioned above [in Ar. vol. 8 and Eng. vol. 15] in reference to the verse (7:54), *… and He is firm in power; He throws the veil of night over the day*, that, *al-istiwā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh* [lit. sitting on the throne] is an allusion to taking possession and the reins to regulate affairs.

With reference to God —compatible with His grandeur and holiness— His authority dominates over creation and His ownership is established over everything by regulating their affairs and addressing their concerns. Thus, His *istawā ʿalā al-ʿarsh* means that His Ownership applies to everything and He regulates everything in the Heavens and on the earth, great and small, important and insignificant. He is the Lord of everything, One in His Lordship—and by Lord we mean nothing else but being the owner of a thing and the regulator of its affair. That is why reference to His *istawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh* is followed by that to His all-encompassing ownership and knowledge. This is an explanation of the debate over the aforementioned "sitting" (*istawā*).

It is well known that *al-Raḥmān* (The Beneficent) is an exaggerated form derived from *raḥmah* which means effusion through bringing into being and regulating. It renders a sense of multiplicity more compatible with *istawā* than any of the other Names or Attributes of God and that is why it is singled out for mention. It is clear from the above that *al-Raḥmān* is the subject, the predicate of which is *istawā*. *Alā ʿal-ʿarsh* is linked to *istawā*. The aim is to clarify *al-istawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh*. This can also be inferred from all the other (similar) verses. There was repeated discussion of *al-istawā alā ʿal-ʿarsh* with regard to all of them, below are a few examples: *… and He is firm in power* (*thumma [i]stawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh*); *He throws the veil of night over the day* (7:54); *… and He is firm in*

power (*thumma [i]stawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh*), *regulating the affair* (10:3); … *and He mounted the throne* (of authority) (*thumma [i]stawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh*); *you have not besides Him any guardian* (32:4); *and He is firm in power* (*thumma [i]stawā ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh*); *He knows that which goes deep down into the earth* (57:4).

Therefore, what some allegedly say is clearly incorrect, namely that *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh* is the subject and predicate [thus meaning: The Beneficent is on the Throne]. Next, *istawā* is a verb, the subject of which is, what is in the Heavens. *Lahu* (His) is the dependent object of *istawā*. Everything's *istawā* to Him means that they proceed in conformity with His will and follow His command. The meaning of Throne (*ʿArsh*) has been fully discussed at the end of verse 7:54 (in Ar. vol. 8). Some of the specific details will (also) be discussed in the relevant oral traditions, if God wills.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَىٰ ﴿٦﴾

(20:6) ***His is what is in the Heavens and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground*** **(al-tharā).**

Tharā is said to mean moist earth or any earth. What is beneath the ground means what is in the belly of the earth but not on the surface. Thus, everything on the surface of the earth, its parts and what lives on it, refers to all that we know and which can be deduced by our senses, such as humanity and the different types of animals and plants and (also) that which we do not know or perceive.

If the ownership applies to everything in the Heavens and the earth, that is, its constituent parts, it also applies to the Heavens and the earth themselves because a thing (having material existence) is none other than its own constituent parts.

One of the two pillars of Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*)—namely ownership—has been explained above, for, accordingly, Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*) means ownership and regulation.

وَإِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾

(20:7) ***And if you utter the saying aloud, then surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden.***

Al-jahr bi al-qawl means saying something in a raised voice (audibly)

and *al-Isrār* has the opposite meaning. As He says: *And conceal your word or manifest it …* (67:13).

Al-sirr means to keep words to oneself. *Akhfā* (more hidden) is superlative derived from *khafā'* (secrecy) as indicated by the escalation [from secret to more hidden] in the context of the verse. One should not pay attention to the claim by people that *akhfā* is a verb in the past tense the subject of which is He and thus the meaning rendered according to this interpretation is: He knows what is secret and hides His knowledge.

Making *akhfā* indefinite—by removing the definite article—emphasizes the secrecy. Reference in the verse firstly to manifesting one's word then confirming knowledge of that which is subtler—namely secret—and escalating it to yet more hidden, indicates that the aim is to confirm His All-Encompassing knowledge. It means: No matter whether you manifest your word and declare what you mean—as if *al-qawl* means that which is on one's mind because it normally only becomes apparent through speaking—or keep it secret to yourself and hide it, or, keep it more hidden even to the point that it is not known to you, verily God knows it.

The fundamental intention (*aṣl*) is to break down speech into audible, secret and more hidden and confirm that He knows them all, then place the confirmation of knowledge of the secret and more hidden in the next break down and respond concisely. He indicates the answer to the question in both limbs and in terms of something being even truer if the first thing is true, with brevity—as if to say: If you are asking about His knowledge of what you say audibly, He knows it. How can He not, given that He knows what is secret and even more hidden. This is nice construction (of the sentence). One [exegete] says that *al-sirr* (the secret) means your words which you hide from others and do not speak out audibly and *akhfā minhu* (more hidden than it) means what passes through your mind. Nevertheless, what he says is true about secrets. However speech is only referred to as *sirr* (secret) when it is suppressed in one's self. Thus, the best explanation is as (we have) cited above.

Whatever the case may be, the verse confirms His All-Encompassing knowledge—be it manifest or secret. An example of referring to His knowledge after mentioning His being firm in power is: *… and He is firm in power; He knows that which goes deep down into the earth and that which comes forth out of it* (57:4).

It is well known that His knowledge of what transpires in His Kingdom

and the events which occur within the dominion of His authority require His pleasure and permission and from another perspective (require) His will for this flowing system—that is, regulation (*tadbīr*). Thus the verse confirms the comprehensiveness of His regulation just as the previous verse which confirms the comprehensiveness of His ownership. The sum total meaning (of the verses) is ownership and regulation. This is what absolute Lordship means. Thus the objective of the verses is to provide an explanation for and to prove His absolute Lordship.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

(20:8) *God—there is no god but He; His are the very best names* (al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā).

This verse appears to be the culmination of all the preceding verses. That is why it is most appropriate to interpret God's name as the predicate of an implied subject, namely, this One, Who is referred to in the previous verses, is God—there is no god but He, etc. However, the most likely interpretation is that the verse is independent and comprehensive in its meaning, God's name being the subject and, *there is no god but He*, is the subject of the predicate. *His are the very best names*, is a second predicate following the first one.

Whatever the case may be, *God—there is no god but He*, could be explained by what was confirmed in the previous verses—that God is One and the absolute Lord. Alternatively, it could be explained by what follows it, that is, *His are the very best names*. As for the first interpretation, it is because in the statement, *There is no god* (ilāh) *but He*, *ilāh* means either object of worship or true object of worship thus rendering a meaning of: God—there is no true object of worship in existence apart from Him. Being an object of worship is a corollary and concomitant to being the Lord because worship is a type of representation and mark of servitude, being owned by and showing need to Him. It is necessary for the object of worship to own His worshiper and to regulate his affair that is, to be a Lord to him. Because He is the Lord of everything and there is no Lord apart from Him, (therefore) He is the object of worship with none other apart from Him.

As for the second interpretation, it is because worship is (done) for one of the following (reasons):

(1) Hope of good which the object of worship possesses and is worshiped for acquiring it.
(2) Fear of evil resulting from being forsaken and his affair not cared for by the object of worship.
(3) It [the object of worship] is worthy of worship and subordinating oneself to it.

God is the owner of every source of goodness. Nothing can claim ownership over anything except that which has been bestowed upon him by Him . Notwithstanding, He is the absolute owner of that which He has made it owner of and the All-Powerful (*al-Qādir*) over what He has given power over. Unto Him belong the best of Names, from which all goodness emanates for He is the Bestower, the Granter of Favor, the Quickener, the Healer, the Provider, the Oft-Forgiving, the Merciful, the Rich, the Self-Sufficient. Therefore, He and no one else, deserves to be worshiped with the hope of being the recipient of the good that He possesses.

God is the Dominator, Whose sovereignty no one can resist. He is the strong Avenger, severe in punishment. No one can commit an aggression against another without His permission. Thus, He deserves to be worshiped out of fear of His Wrath even if one is not humbled by His Greatness and Grandeur. God alone is worthy of worship because the only thing that makes something worthy of being worshiped is perfection. Perfection alone is what deficiency concomitant to humility, submits. Therefore, it is either beauty to which the soul develops a strong attraction or majesty before which the mind prostrates and to which the heart becomes dazed. All grace belongs to Him—there is no essence which is not a sign of His Beauty. All majesty belongs to Him and any splendor is just a sign of His majesty. Thus, there is no god or object of worship apart from God because *His are the very best names*.

This means that every name which is synonymous with one of His attributes, is of the best names. Simply put, describing a name as good indicates that what it means—in morphological terminology—is an adjective like an active participle (or simple epithet) resembling [an active participle] as opposed to a proper noun. A proper noun in Arabic is called an *ʿalam* (or a flag), because it "flags" the essence, since the sole function of a proper noun is to refer to substances. To describe something as beautiful or ugly is the function of adjectives which explains the exterior of a word, such as just, unjust, knowledgeable and ignorant. *Al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* are

words that refer to extremely beautiful adjectival meanings like Everliving, Omniscient and Omnipotent. Describing can also be referred to as naming, for example His words, *Say: Give them a name* (13:33), which means to describe them.

This is also demonstrated by His words: *And God's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names* (7:180), signifying that they incline from truth towards falsehood and refer to Him by names, which are inappropriate for the domain of His Holiness. Thus, "the Best Names" are those which have an adjectival intent such as, God (*al-Ilāh*), Everliving, Omniscient and Omnipotent as opposed to the word "God" (*Lafẓ al-Jalālah*, or Word of Might), which is a proper noun of the Divine. Next, names are of two types:

(1) Unpleasing, such as, oppressor, tyrant or ignorant and

(2) Beautiful, such as, just and knowledgeable.

Beautiful Names are further divided into:

a) Those names which contain some elements of perfection and are not completely free of blemishes of deficiency and contingency, such as, handsome (*ṣabīḥ al-manẓar*), average height (*muʿtadil al-qāmah*) and curly-haired (*jaʿd al-shaʿr*)

b) The names which are unadulterated/untainted in perfection, such as, The Everliving (*al-Ḥayy*), Omniscient (*al-ʿAlīm*) and Omnipotent (*al-Qādir*) due to abstracting their meanings from the adulteration of matter and being composed of parts. They are the best names because they are free from any deficiency or flaw. They are the ones which are most appropriate to be used for Him and for Him to be described with.

This is not particular to one name or to the exclusion of any other. On the contrary, every best name is His —on account of the plural preceded by the definite article which indicates universality in His words: *Lahu al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*. Putting the predicate first indicates exclusivity, so they are His alone. What it means for them to be His is that He owns them for Himself. Whichever of them can be found in anyone else is through His dispensing it as He pleases as indicated by the restrictive structure of the following verses: *He is the Living, there is no god but He …* (40:65), *… and He is the Knowing, the Powerful* (30:54). *… He is the Hearing, the Seeing* (40:56), *… that the power is wholly God's* (2:165), *… surely all honor is for God* (4:139), *… and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases* (2:155).

There are other examples.

There is no harm in saying that His ownership applies to all of His Names and Attributes even those which are identical to His Essence such as the Everliving, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent and such as life, knowledge and power. This is because something may be attributed to His Self as property as in: *My Lord! Surely I have no control (upon any) but my own self* (5:25).

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Examining Narrations

(1) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* it says regarding the Words (of God), *We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful*: It is narrated that the Prophet used to lift up one of his feet during prayer to make himself more tired. Thereafter, God revealed: *Ṭā Hā. We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful*. The same is also narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq

Author's comment: The same is narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās.[1]

(2) al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq said: When God's Messenger used to pray, he would stand on the tips of his toes until they became swollen. Thereafter, God, the Exalted and Transcendent revealed: Step on it (*Ṭāhā*) (which means "O man" in the dialect of Ṭayy)—O, Muhammad—*We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful. Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears.*[2]

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Author's comment: Something to the same effect is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir[3] and on the authority of ʿAlī[4]. The same is also narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās.[5]

(3) ʿAlī said: When (the words), *O you who have wrapped up in your garments! Rise to pray in the night except a little* (73:1-2), was

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1 *al-Durr al-Manthūr* on the authority of ʿAbd ibn Ḥāmid and Ibn al-Mundhir on the authority of al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas and also on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh

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2 *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī through its chain of narration on the authority of Abū Baṣīr

3 *al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration on the authority of Abū Baṣīr

4 *al-Iḥtijāj* on the authority of Moses ibn Jaʾfar on the authority of his forefathers

5 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Mardawayh and al-Bayhaqī

revealed to the Prophet he rose the whole night until his feet became swollen so he began lifting up one foot and planting the other. Thereafter, Gabriel descended and said: Step on it (*Ṭāhā*)—meaning (step on) the ground with your feet—O, Muhammad—*We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful*, and He revealed: *therefore read what is easy of the Qur'an.*[1]

Author's comment: The accepted opinion is that this narration is the original account of the story—the Prophet's standing on his feet during prayer until they became swollen, then starting to lift one and planting the other or standing on the balls of his feet or the tips of his toes. In each of the narrations, part of the story is referred to as the reason for the revelation even though all the help in the world cannot make some of the narrations mean that. Still, two matters pertaining to this narration need to be addressed:

(i) It is difficult to understand how the verses apply to the story.

(ii) The part in the narration which says: Step on it (*Ṭāhā*)—meaning (step on) the ground with your feet—O, Muhammad.

Al-Qummī's narration states something similar, Step on it (*Ṭāhā*)—O, Muhammad—*We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful. Nay, it is a reminder to him who fears.*

This would mean that *Ṭāhā* is direct speech comprising the imperative form of *waṭaʾ* (he trod), *yaṭaʾ* (he treads). Its object is the feminine pronoun referring to the ground, that is, "Step on (*Ṭā*) the ground and put both your feet on it. Do not lift one of them up and plant the other".

The problem with this interpretation is that the end is incompatible with the beginning of the narration because the narration means that he would lift one foot up and plant the other during prayer after his feet became swollen, in the hope that it would relieve the pain from the foot he had lifted up, then he could get some rest and proceed to occupy himself with his Lord without any distractions. Thus, relieving his burden and tiredness in the circumstances could only be achieved by telling him to pray or stand less and not by telling him to plant both feet on the ground thus adding to his tiredness and making his pain more severe. Hence, saying: Step on it (*Ṭāhā*) would be incompatible with (the words), *We have not revealed the Qur'an to you that you may be unsuccessful*. It may be that

1 *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* cited by Ibn Mardawayh

"that is, the ground with your feet" is the words of the narrator—the gist has been recounted.

Furthermore, it is at odds with the reported recitation based on *Ṭā Hā* being two alphabetical letters which have no lexical meaning like all the other alphabetical letters at the beginning of many Qur'anic chapters.

A group of exegetes claim that *Ṭā Hā* means: "O, man". Then, one of them claims that it is Nabatean. Alternative claims are that it is Ethiopian, Hebrew, Syriac. It has also been attributed to the tribes ʿUkl and ʿAkk.

Alternatively it is claimed that it is the Qurayshi dialect. Al-Zamakhsharī believes it to be possible that it is the language of the tribe ʿAkk. Its original meaning is "O you (*yāʾ hadhā*)!" The *yāʾ* became transformed into a *ṭāʾ*, *dhā* was omitted for the sake of ease and it became *Ṭāhā*. It is alleged that it means: "O, Fulān! (So-and-So)" Some people pronounce it *Ṭah* that is with a *fathah* above the *Ṭāʾ* and a *sukūn* (a diacritic indicating a constant) above the *hāʾ* as if it is an imperative derived from *waṭaʾa*, *yaṭaʾu* (he trod, he treads), the *hāʾ* is pausative. It is (also) claimed that it is one of God's names.

It is not necessary to pay attention to any of these opinions or to scrutinize them.

True, it is narrated on the authority of al-Thawrī that "Ṭā Hā" is one of the Prophet's names just as other narrations say that "Yā Sīn" is also one of his names[1]. Both names are narrated on the authority of Abu Jaʾfar[2]. Because it is a Heavenly name, he was not called or known by it before the revelation of the Qur'an. It is not that "Ṭā Hā", lexically, has an adjectival meaning, as it makes no sense to call him by a proper noun, which has no meaning apart from his self, when he already has another name by which he is well known. The truth about the alphabetical letters at the beginning of chapters is that they have symbolic meanings cast by God towards His Messenger. The chapter Ṭā Hā begins by addressing the Prophet : *Ṭā Hā. We have not revealed the Qur'an to you …* The chapter Yā Sīn is the same: *Yā Sīn. I swear by the Qur'an full of wisdom most surely you are one of the Messengers* unlike any other chapter which begins with

1 *Rūḥ al-maʿānī* on the authority al-Bāqir and according to *Maʿānī al-akhbār* via its chain of narration on the authority of al-Ṣādiq.

2 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of Sayf.

alphabetical letters, which most likely denotes that the meaning symbolized by the alphabetical letters at the beginning of these two chapters is something attributable to his personality brought into effect by his very self. Thus, it is an adjective for an inward personality exclusive to him. Hence, it is one of his names . If something is said about him and Ṭā Hā or Yā Sīn is mentioned, what is meant is that the person being addressed is Ṭā Hā or Yā Sīn. Thereafter, it became a proper noun through extensive usage.

This suffices as an explanation of the narration. It comes under the category of nicknaming, like the famous nickname of "Taʾabbaa. Sharran" and like:

> "I am a man well known and who rises to eminence, When I put down the turban, you will know me".
> Meaning: "I am someone people kept saying well-known, well-known about" until he became recognized as "Well-known".

(4) [Imam] Musā ibn Jaʾfar was asked about God's Words: *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā*ʾ. He replied: (Figuratively speaking), He is "equidistant" from everything so nothing is closer to Him than anything else.[1]

(5) Al-Qummī also narrates it in his exegesis on his authority and in *al-Tawḥīd*[2] on his authority as well. The same is narrated in *al-Kāfī* and *al-Tawḥīd* on his authority with the addition of: No distant thing is distant from Him. No close thing is close to Him. He is "equidistant" from everything.[3]

(6) *Al-Iḥtijāj* says on the authority of ʿAlī in the hadith on *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā*ʾ: It means His regulation is firm and His command is raised.

Author's comment: The exegesis in these three narrations is the exegesis of the whole verse, not the word *istawā*ʾ alone. Otherwise, *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh* would be a full sentence made up of a subject and predicate [that is, the Beneficent is on the Throne]. The context provided by all of the other verses mentioning *istawā*ʾ is referred to above. What the last narration says supports that—that is, "His command is raised" after "His

1 *Al-Iḥtijāj* on the authority of al-Ḥasan ibn Rāshid.

2 Via its chain of narration on the authority of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān

3 Through a chain of narration back to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Hajjāj

regulation is firm"—because its apparent meaning is that the universe is on the Throne so the narrations are based on the verse being an allusion to the authority of taking hold and spreading.

(7) al-Ṣādiq said: Whoever claims that God is from something or in something or on something has attributed partners [to Him]. He then said: Whoever claims that God is from something believes Him to be created. Whoever claims that He is in something claims that He is restricted. Whoever claims that He is on something believes Him to be carried[1].

(8) *Al-Tawḥīd* says in a long hadith on the authority of al-Ṣādiq which says *inter alia*: The man asking the question said: *Al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā?* al-Ṣādiq said: "Thus, how He described Himself. That is how He is in control of the Throne, distinct from His creation without the Throne carrying Him, without the Throne containing Him and without the Throne being special to Him. Hence, we say: He carries the Throne and holds the Throne. We say of that what He says: *His Chair* (kursiyy) *extends over the Heavens and the earth* (2:255). We attest what He confirms regarding the Throne and Chair and deny the Throne or the Chair containing [Him] or His, Mighty and Sublime is He, having any need for a place or a thing which He is created. On the contrary, He created them in need of Him".

Author's comment: His words: "We attest what He confirms regarding the Throne and the Chair …" are an indication of the People of the Household's methodology in interpreting Qur'anic verses capable of sustaining more than one interpretation (*mutashābihāt*) which refer to His Names, Attributes, Actions and extrasensory Signs, by considering them in the context of definitively decisive verses (*muḥkamāt*), clearing Him of what decisive verses absolve Him of and substantiating what is confirmed by the verse, that is, the bare meaning, stripped of any adulteration of deficiency or contingency that is refuted by the decisive verses.

Thus the *ʿarsh* is the place where the reins of power and the rulings issuing from a king begin and end. It is an elevated domed throne with wooden or metal fashioned supports upon which the king sits.

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1 *Al-Tawḥīd* via its chain of narration on the authority of al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar.

Next, decisive verses such as: … *nothing like a likeness of Him* (42:11) and *Glory be to God (for freedom) from what they describe* (37:159) show that He has no body or any physical characteristics. Thus it is denied that the Throne (ʿ*arsh*) attributed to Him in (the verses): *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā*ʾ (20:5) and *Say: Who is the Lord of the seven Heavens and the Lord of the mighty Throne (ʿarsh)?* (23:86) is a throne made of a specified material and is of a particular shape. The basic meaning remains, that is, it is the position from which the current rules in the universe's system are issued. It is one of the levels of knowledge external to His Essence. The standard which is used to ascertain that what we have referred to as the fundamental meaning is that it is the purport which abides, so long as the name remains. In other words, it revolves around whether or not it is correct to continuously refer to something by a particular name, even if the physical manifestations are altered and the particulars are different.

An example of that is the first lamp which appeared—a device used to illuminate the darkness of the night. Its physical manifestation at that time was a container in which a wick was inserted into the tallow, thereafter the tip would be lit and it would burn the tallow it drew from and light up everything around it. Then the name was passed on to the likes of candles and gaslights and continued to be carried on to similar forms of light eventually settling today on the electrical lamp, which shares neither the substance nor the form of the original. It is just a device to light up the darkness and literally became known as a lamp. It is like the word, "weapon" which when it first appeared, was used to refer to a copper or bronze axe and today is virtually used to refer to anything from cannon to an atom bomb. This kind of change and development has spread into many instruments and activities that mankind deals with in his daily life. Generally, the Companions would only talk about laws and not other things pertaining to His Names, Attributes, Deeds and so on. They would only deny anything concomitant to anthropomorphism as per the decisive verses clearing Him of that. They would remain silent about affirming the meaning that remains after denying what is false. For example, they would say about, *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā*ʾ, that *istawā*ʾ in the sense of a body settling in a place by resting against it, cannot be said of Him . As for what *istawā*ʾ actually means, (they say) God knows best. (In other words), the matter is left to Him. That is what their consensus claims. Indeed, one of them said the consensus of people for the first three

centuries AH, was to follow *tafwīḍ* (consigning or delegating), meaning to negate everything concomitant to anthropomorphism and not talking about what is actually meant.

However, according to the oral traditions, this approach was refuted by the fact that the methodology of the People of the Household was to both affirm and negate (*al-ithbāt wa al-nafy*) and to discuss with scrutiny the facts of the religion, as opposed to simply saying that which it is not, without saying, what it is. Proof of that is, those of their oral traditions which have been preserved—are so numerous that only an arrogant person would deny them.

Indeed it is narrated on the authority of Umm Salamah regarding the meaning of *istawā*ʾ : "*Istawā*ʾ is not unknown. 'How' is inconceivable but attesting to it is faith whereas rejecting it is disbelief". This proves that she believed in this view. If she had believed in what is attributed to the Companions she would have said: "*Istawā*ʾ is unknown, 'How' is inconceivable". The majority of Companions, early generations of Muslims (*salaf*) and their successors from among them follow this methodology. Al-Ghazali attributes it to the four Imams: Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad and also to al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī out of the compilers of hadith collections and to a number of illustrious early Muslims. What led them to maintain their silence on the meaning via positiva—according to many, is when that which is confirmed follows that which is denied and is at odds with the literal meaning of the wording, making it a figurative interpretation, the seeking of which is forbidden by God as in: (3:7) … *and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. but none knows its interpretation except God* based on there being a pause after the clause, *except God*. Some go further, saying that all exegesis is forbidden, claiming—as narrated by al-Alūsī—that whoever performs exegesis is interpreting. Whoever does not perform exegesis is not interpreting because interpretation is exegesis.

It was discussed above (in Eng. vol. 5) regarding the end part of the verse in Sūrah Āl ʿImrān (The Family of ʿImran), under the discourse on decisiveness and ambiguousness (*al-muḥkamāt and al-mutashābihāt*), that the interpretation referred to and forbidden is not the meaning contrary to the literal wording if the ambiguous (part) is referred to [or returned to] the decisive (part of the Book). Explaining the former through the latter is by no means "interpretation" (*taʾwīl*) because interpretation and

exegesis are two different things.

Next, despite the people's caution regarding religious explanations which refer to His Names and Attributes and restricting themselves to negating without affirming, they do not follow the same course in respect to what is stated in the Book and Sunnah when describing His acts such as, the Throne, the Chair, Veils, the Pen, the Tablet, Book of Deeds, Gates of Heaven, etc. even though they all have one common denominator, which is to disassociate Him from any form of need or contingence. This is because it is human need which brings about things like a throne, chair, tablet or pen. We create chairs and thrones to rest on and glorify ourselves in. We show distinction by way of glory and grandeur and represent the same by appointing a king or sultan. We have adopted tablets, pens and writing because of the pressing need to record that which we can no longer perceive or remember etc. So what is the difference between the ambiguous verses which mention that He has hearing, sight, a hand, a lower leg, is content or is sad—and which create the impression of corporealization and attributable to need and contingency, and those verses which state that He has a Throne, Chair, Host, Throne Bearers, Tablet and Pen and which create the impression of need and contingency? Then, what is the difference between a decisive verse which removes the ambiguity in the first group, that is, *nothing like a likeness of Him* (42:11) and the decisive verse which removes the ambiguity in the second group, that is, *and God is He Who is the Self-sufficient?* (35:15)

True, Imam Rāzī makes an excuse for that, namely that if we were to open the door of interpretation with regard to these matters it would lead to the permissibility of interpreting all religious knowledge and laws of the Shariah which is what the esotericists (*bāṭiniyyah*) say. The reader knows that interpretation according to one's own opinion, of everything, even the laws contained in the religious invitation and promulgated among the people by the Prophet's teaching and edification is the rejection of a fundamental belief and arrogance towards what is intuitively known except what evidence has shown something to be ambiguous and there is a decisive verse to remove the ambiguity. Hence, leaving it [the ambiguity] to its literal meaning closes the door of interpretation with regard to all other decisive, non-ambiguous knowledge, like killing truth to kill falsehood. If one likes, one could say: "Killing falsehood by reviving another falsehood". Furthermore, the reader knows that referring an ambiguous

verse to a decisive one [to derive its intended meaning] is by no means interpretation according to one's own opinion.

Necessity forced some of them to say that creating this exceptional luminous body—which dazzles the mind due to its greatness—in the shape of a throne with supports and bearers and placing it above the seven Heavens, without anyone sitting on it or having a need for it, and, maintaining it in that manner eternally, comes under the heading of grace created by God to inspire the believers so that they believe in it although unseen and be rewarded and recompensed in the hereafter. It is like the Tablet, the Pen and all other great signs which cannot be perceived. The invalidity of such opinion requires no further explanation.

After this group known as the *mufawwiḍah* (lit. those who delegate; that is, delegate knowledge to God) comes the class known as *al-muʾawwilah* (the interpreters). They are the ones who subscribe to carrying out exegesis of the ambiguous verses—verses on names and attributes both through positiva (affirming what it is) and through negativa (negating what it is not). They free Him of everything concomitant to need and contingency by interpreting it—by not taking it literally—in ways which conform with accepted principles of the religion or school of thought (*madhhab*). They are divided into the following categories:

(i) Those who content themselves through positiva, with exactly what they negate on the basis of evidence, are the ones who explain the Names and Attributes (of God) by negating flaws. Hence, according to them, knowledge means a lack of ignorance. One who knows, is one who is not ignorant, and so on with the other attributes. It means divesting the Transcendent Essence of the Attributes of Perfection, whereas rational proofs, the literal meanings and explicit extracts of the Scripture and Sunnah refute it. It is one of the opinions of the Sabians which has infiltrated into Islam.

(ii) Those who explain the verses with connotations which are contrary to their literal meanings but are deemed possible by reason or oral tradition which does not contradict accepted principles. It is—according to them—known as interpretation (*taʾwīl*).

(iii) Those who are content with the possibilities covered by oral tradition(s). They do not attach any significance to reason.

The reader will know from our discourse on decisive and ambiguous verses (in Eng. vol. 5) that exegesis of the Mighty Book other than with

the Book and widely transmitted traditions (Sunnah) is an example of exegesis based on opinion which is forbidden in the Book and the Sunnah.

With regard to His actions which are not inferable to an attribute, most of the three groups known as the interpreters (*al-muʾawwilah*), hold the same view as the early Muslims, known as the *mufawwiḍah*, which is to keep them in accordance with their literal meanings—instances familiar to us.

As for that which can be inferred to an attribute, they apply their own opinion. Hence, with regard to His Words: *al-Raḥmān ʿalā ʿal-ʿarsh istawā* they interpret *istiwā* similarly to seizing (*istīlā*) or taking possession (*istiʿlā*). They maintain a familiar and literal interpretation of the *ʿArsh*—which is one of His actions that is not inferable to Attributes—that is, as a created body in the form of a domed throne with supports.

One tradition narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah is that God descends to the earth's Heaven every Thursday night. They interpret His descending as the bestowal of His mercy and construe the earth's Heaven as the moon's orbit and so forth. The reader will ascertain from the above that there is no justification or proof for interpreting a verse contrary to its literal meaning because the Book was not revealed as a puzzle or an enigma. Furthermore, the hadith is also divided into decisive and ambiguous sayings, just like the Holy Qur'an.

Maintaining a literal interpretation of the Qur'an by relying on a literal meaning just like in the hadith, is in reality referring what is ambiguous in the Qur'an to what is ambiguous in the hadith whereas we have been instructed to refer (or to return) that which is ambiguous in the Qur'an to the decisive part (of the Book). Their acting on these oral traditions and giving them preponderance over the literal meaning of the Book creates further ambiguity. That is because they are oral traditions which are narrated through a few chains (*akhbār aḥād*) and not through so many chains as to be widely transmitted (*mutawātirah*) or to have issued without a doubt (*qatʿīyyat al-ṣudūr*). For any of the oral traditions of this status—even authentic ones—to be acted upon they need to be accorded probative value by the Sharia through promulgation (*jaʿl*) or endorsement (*imdā*). It has been made so clear in the study of legal presumptions (*ʿIlm al-Usūl*) as to be close to being a priori that probative value for oral traditions narrated by a few chains of narration is meaningless except in relation to laws for example doctrinal knowledge and external subjects.

Therefore narrations transmitted en masse and those supported by contextual evidence of their indubitability, such as those heard and uttered by an Infallible are authoritative, even if they do not pertain to laws, because proof of infallibility is itself proof of their truthfulness. All these matters are resolved and can be found in the appropriate place(s) by anyone who wishes to take the time to verify them.

(9) A Bedouin man came to God's Messenger and said: Souls have strived and property has been used up or exhausted so give us water. Verily we seek your intercession before God and we seek God's intercession against you. Thereafter, God's Messenger said: Woe unto you! Do you know what you are saying? God's Messenger said: *Subḥānallāh!* (Glory be to God!) and carried on saying: *Subḥanallāh!* (Glory be to God!) until it was acknowledged on his Companions' faces. He then said: Woe unto you! Do you know what God is? Verily God is atop His Throne and His Throne is above His Heavens like that. He [the man] said: By its fingers, it is like a dome. It squeaks the way a new saddle squeaks under the rider.[1]

Author's comment: The text is not free from defect and the only reason we have cited the narration is because it is one of the oral traditions with the most explicit physical descriptions of the Throne. Some of the narrations indicate that it has legs. Others state that it has four (standard) bearers. Some make mention of it being above the Heavens in line with the Kaʿbah. Others say that the Chair (*Kursī*) compared to the Throne (*ʿArsh*) is like a ring cast in the midst of wilderness, and the Heavens and the earth have the same relationship to the Chair. The method of exegesis employed by the Imams of the People of the Household when discussing these oral traditions was referred to above. We have cited many points in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places), which is in (Arabic) volume eight of this book, for their view to be inferred from it.[2]

(10) al-Ṣādiq was asked about God's Words, Mighty and Sublime is He: *He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden*. He replied: The secret means what you keep to yourself and what is yet more

1 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* on the authority of Jubayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Jubayr ibn Mutʿim on the authority of his father on the authority of his grandfather.

2 Now in English volumes 15 & 16. (Pub.)

hidden means what runs through your mind but which you were made to forget.[1]

(11) *Majmaʾ al-bayān* says: It is narrated on the authority of—al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq: Secret means what you hid in yourself and more secret means what ran through your mind which you were made to forget.

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1 *Maʿānī al-akhbār* says via its chain of narration on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Muslim

Verses 9-48

This is the beginning of relating the story of Moses. Four stages are related in the chapter, namely:

First: Moses being chosen as a Messenger on Mount (Sinai) in the Valley of Ṭuwā.

Second: His being commanded to summon Pharaoh, followed by his invitation to monotheism to Pharaoh in association with his [Moses'] brother, to send the Israelites with him, to complete the proof and bring (to) him a miracle.

Third: His exodus with the Israelites from Egypt, Pharaoh's pursuit [of them], his [the Pharaoh] being drowned and the Israelites' escape.

Fourth: The Israelites' worship of the calf and the outcome of their affair and that of the Samaritan and his calf. The verses which we have cited (above) address the first stage.

The manner in which the story connects to the preceding verses is a reminder of monotheism and the threat of punishment because the narrative begins with a monotheistic revelation and concludes with Moses' words, *Your God is only God, there is no god but He*. This refers to Pharaoh perishing and the Samaritan being cast out. The previous verses began by [stating] that the Qur'an comprises the true call and is a reminder, to him who fears, and concluded with His Words, *God—there is no god but He; His are the very best names.*

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩﴾

(20:9) ***And has the story of Moses come to you?***

This question is a confirmation to commence relating the story (of Moses) as it will be seen.

إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾

(20:10) ***When he saw fire, he said to his family: Stop, for surely I***

see a fire, haply I may bring to you therefrom a live coal or find a guidance at the fire.

Makth means tarrying. *Inās* means seeing or sensing something. It is derived from *uns* (familiarity) which is the opposite of *nufūr* (aversion). That is why, it is said that it means seeing something familiar, so sight of it is strong. *Qabas* means the flame lit at the top of a piece of wood or something similar. *Hudā* is a verbal noun in the sense of an active participle or the *muḍāf ilayh* (possessor) of an implied *muḍāf* (possessed)—namely a source of guidance. Either way, it is that through which guidance is achieved.

The context [provided by] the verse and what follows is evidence that he was on his way from Midian to Egypt; his family was with him. They were near to the Valley of Ṭuwā in Mount Sinai on a dark, winter's night. They had lost their way when he [Moses] saw a fire. Thereafter he thought to walk towards it, and, if he found anyone there, to ask him the (right) way. Otherwise, he would take a firebrand to light a fire so they could stay warm.

There is in (the clause), *he said to his family, Stop*, a sense or indeed an indication that there was someone else besides his family. Similarly, the emphasis and use of the word *inās* (I see) in, *Stop, for surely I see a fire*, indicates that only he saw it—no one else from his family noticed it. This is also supported, firstly by, *When he saw fire*. Likewise, *haply I may bring to you …* indicates that there is implied phrase: "Stop, so that I can go to it. Haply I may bring you a firebrand from it or find a guide by the fire—to guide [direct] us".

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾

(20:11-12) ***So when he came to it, a voice was uttered: O Moses: Surely I am your Lord, therefore take off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Ṭuwa.***

Ṭuwā is the name of a valley in Mount (Sinai). It is what God called, the sacred valley. This name and description is proof that the commandment to remove his shoes was out of respect for the valley so that it would not be trodden upon with shoes. Next, making the injunction to remove

[his] shoes a logical consequence (*tafrīʿ*) along with, *Sure I am your Lord*, indicates that the sacredness of the valley was due to it being a realm of spiritual closeness and a place of divine presence and dialog with God (*munājāt*).

Thus, the verse can be interpreted—for example—as: "A voice was uttered: O, Moses, Lo, I am your Lord and you are in My Presence. The valley has become sacred thereby so observe the etiquette and remove your shoes". Sacred places and times are treated as such in the same way for example the Holy Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*), all other venerated mosques and shrines in Islam and religious celebrations (*ʿīds* and blessed days). That place only became holy and honored because of its being linked to an auspicious event, rite or sacred act of worship, which occurred there and was made part of the Shariah there. Otherwise, no place and time is superior to any other.

When Moses heard His Words, *O, Moses Surely I am your Lord* he was certain in his mind that he was being spoken to by his Lord and that they were His Words. That was because it was revelation from Him . He has explicitly stated in (the Qur'an) that there is no intermediary—veil or Messenger—between Him and whomever He speaks to, if the speech is revelation as in: *And it is not for any mortal that God should speak to them except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His leave what He will* (42:51).

If no intermediary is supposed, the recipient of revelation will not conceive there to be anyone else speaking to him or imagine there to be [someone else] apart from God. He will not believe the words to be anyone else's but His. If the speaker could be someone else or the words could be someone else's, then it would not be a direct speech between the person and God, without any intermediary. This is the case with a Prophet or Messenger when he first receives revelation through Prophethood or message. He will not have any doubt or suspicion that it is God Who is revealing to him without needing to apply any theoretical reasoning (*iʿmāl naẓar*), seek proof or demonstration. If he needed any of that, it would be acquisition through mental faculty and not receipt of unseen knowledge without any intermediary.

Claim: Narrating the (same) story elsewhere, He says: *And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw nigh, holding communion [with Us]* (19:52).

(Also), His Words elsewhere: … *from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the bush* (28:30).
(These verses) confirm that there was a veil when he [Moses] was spoken to.

Reply: This is true. However, confirmation (that there was) a veil or Messenger when he was spoken to does not contradict his being spoken to through revelation because like all His other actions, revelation is not free of an intermediary. The matter only revolves around whether the person spoken to—who receives the words—is attentive [to it]. If he is attentive to the intermediary which carries the words or through which he is veiled from Him , the words are (still) a message (being) sent to him and a revelation, for example, through an Angel.

If he [the one spoken to] is attentive to Him , it is revelation from Him even if there is an intermediary to which He has not been attentive to. Proof of what has been said is in His words to Moses in the next verse, *so listen to what is revealed*—He calls it, revelation. The veil has been confirmed elsewhere in the Qur'an. In summary, (the clause), *Surely I am your Lord, therefore take off your shoes* … is an instruction to Moses that the situation is one of [divine] presence and a station one is spoken to. He [God] was alone with him and singled him out for His extra attention. That is why, *Surely I am your Lord*, is spoken and not: "I am God" or "I am the Lord of the Worlds". That is also why, *Surely I am God*, does not constitute repetition because (it) clears the place of anyone else participating in the revelation whereas, *Surely, I am God* is part of the revelation. There is subtlety beyond measure in hiding the subject of *nadiya* (lit: it was called) as opposed to saying, "We called him", or, "God called him". There is an allusion to the fact that this sign was a surprise to Moses.

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

(20:13) ***And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed:***

The word *ikhtiyār* (choosing) is derived from *al-khayr* (good). The truth of it is that the doer (*fāʿil*) is—for example—hesitant in choosing between actions, one of which has to be given preponderance and performed. Thus, the best one is singled out. He then builds and acts on the basis that it is better than the others. Building and acting on that basis is choosing (*ikhtiyār*). Thus, choice is always for a purpose which is the

doer's aim in performing the action.

Thus, His choosing Moses was for a divine purpose, namely giving him Prophethood and the Message. Testimony to that are His Words made logically consequential to the choice: so listen to what is revealed. The divine will is to send a person who can bear the Prophethood and the message. In His Knowledge, Moses was the most qualified and suitable person for this purpose, so He chose him.

And I have chosen you (wa anā [I]khtartuka) as indicated by the context is like issuing a command to be Prophet and Messenger so it is *inshāʾīyyah* (imperative) and not *khabariyya* (indicative). If it had been indicative, it would have only said, "I have chosen you". However, it is an imperative—selecting him as a Prophet with these very words. Then, once the choice is made, by His Will, the commandment to listen to the revelation comprising the Prophethood and Message is a rational consequence. Thus He says, *so listen to what is revealed*. Listening to what is revealed means being attentive to it.

إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

(20:14) *Surely I am God, there is no god but I, therefore serve Me and keep up prayer for My remembrance.*

This is the revelation he was commanded to pay attention to in the eleven verses which refer both to Prophethood and the Messengership. As for Prophethood, it [reference] is in this verse and the two verses following it. As for the Messengership, it [reference] begins with, *And what is that in your right hand, O Moses!* and ends with, *Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits*. He explicitly states that he is both a Messenger and a Prophet in: *And mention Moses in the Book; surely he was one purified, and he was an Messenger, a Prophet* (19:51).

The three verses on Prophethood make reference to both pillars, namely the pillar of belief and the pillar of action. There are three fundamental beliefs: Unity of God (*al-tawḥīd*), Prophethood and resurrection. *Tawḥīd* and resurrection are referred to but Prophethood is not (referred to) because the Prophet himself is being spoken to. As for the pillar of action, elaborate as it is, it is summarized in one word, namely: *faʿbudnī* (therefore worship Me). Thus all the principles and branches of religion are complete in three verses: *Surely I am God, there is no god but*

I—He who is called by the Name introduces Himself by saying: *Surely I am God* and not saying: "Surely God am I", because when something is present, its attribute is known by itself, not vice versa. This is seen in what Yusuf's brothers said when they recognized him: Are you indeed Yusuf? He said: *I am Yusuf and this is my brother*. Even though the Name God (*Ism al-Jalālah*) is a proper noun for the Transcendent Essence, it means the One called "God" because there is no way to the Holy Essence. It is as if what is said is: "I am He, Who is called God". Thus it is as if the speaker is present and "witnessed", while it is unclear who "God" is [and the latter is defined by the former]. Therefore, "I am that One", is said on the basis that the Name God (*Allah, Ism al-Jalālah*) is, through predominant usage, a proper noun, but not devoid of an adjectival origin.

His Words, *there is no god but I, therefore serve Me*—a statement of monotheism (*kalimat al-tawḥīd*)—is worded consequentially to, *Surely, I am God* because it is literally consequential to it. For, if He is the One from Whom everything begins and by Whom everything subsists and to Whom everything returns, the subjugation of servitude should only be to Him because He is the true God to worship—there is no god but He.

That is why the commandment to serve, *therefore serve Me* is made consequential.

His Words, *and keep up prayer for My remembrance*—singling prayer out for mention—comes under the heading of referring to the particular after the general—out of regard for its status—because prayer is the most representative deed of subjugation of servitude. Remembrance of God is achieved through it, the way a spirit is realized through its channel.

Thus, *li-dhikrī* (My remembrance) is an example of annexing a verbal noun to its object. The *lām* [in *li-dhikrī*] is explanatory. It is the dependent object of *aqim*, meaning keep up. What it means is: "Pray to achieve My remembrance". It is like saying: "Eat to satisfy your hunger" or "Drink to quench your thirst". This is the first interpretation which springs to mind in the given context. There are many opinions on *li-dhikrī*. It is said that it is the dependent object of *aqim,* keep up, as stated above.

Alternatively, it is claimed that it is the dependent object of: i) *al-ṣalāt* (prayer) or ii) *faʿbudnī* (therefore serve Me)

Next, it is said that the *lām* [in *li-dhikrī*] is explanatory. Alternatively, it is claimed that it is to indicate time, meaning: "Keep up prayer when you remember Me", or "when you remember it if you forget it or miss it". Thus

it is like the *lām* in: *Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun* (17:78).

Claims regarding *dhikr* (remembrance):

(i) It means an oral mention which forms part of the prayer.

(ii) It is remembrance with the heart that accompanies [the prayer] and is achieved by it or is dependent on it, and appears through it like the occurrence of an effect, as a result of its cause in: *Perform the prayer at the decline of the sun* (17:78).

(iii) It means the remembrance (*dhikr*) which happens before the prayer.

(iv) It means both inward (*qalbī*) and outward (*qālibī*).

Claims regarding the annexation (*iḍāfah*):

(i) It is an example of annexing the verbal noun to its object

(ii) It is an example of annexing the verbal noun to its subject; it means: "Pray so that I will remember you with commendation and reward", or: "Pray so that I might mention it and My commandment to do so in Heavenly Scriptures".

(iii) It restricts "keeping up [prayer]" to remembrance. This means: "Keep up prayer for the purpose of remembering Me and not for any other motive other than that—such as reward you seek or punishment you fear". Others have rejected this restriction.

(iv) It restricts the thing annexed (*muḍāf*) to the thing to which it is annexed. It means: "Keep up prayer only to remember Me and not to show off or adulterate it with remembrance of anyone else".

It is claimed that the wording does not indicate this even though it is true in itself.

(v) *Dhikr* means remembering to pray, that is keep up prayer when you remember it or in order to remember it. It is based on an implied word annexed (*muḍāf*) that is to keep in mind My prayer or on remembering prayer being a cause of evoking God. Thus the effect is uttered but it is the cause which is intended.

There are other explanations ranging from weak to strong. That which initially comes to mind is the one which was presented first.

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

(20:15) ***Surely the hour is coming—I am about to make it manifest—so that every soul may be rewarded as it strives.***

This is the explanation for what He says in the previous verse, *therefore serve Me*. That does not contradict (the clause), *therefore serve Me* being consequential to the monotheistic declaration (*kalimat al-tawḥīd*) made before it because even though the duty to serve Him is consequential to His Unity, it would have no effect, if a day on which humans are rewarded for their deeds is not confirmed, whereby the good-doers are distinguished from the evildoers and the obedient ones from the disobedient ones. Legislation would be futile and commandment and prohibition in vain—without any effect. That is why it is an unavoidable decree. There is repeated denial of there being any doubt about it in His Words.

I am about to make it manifest (**akādu ukhfīhā**)***:*** It is apparent from the use of *ikhfāʾ* that it means, I almost hide it and conceal 'it', not giving any information about it so that it is much unexpected and more of a surprise, only coming as a shock. As He says: *… it will not come on you but of a sudden …* (7:187).

Alternatively, it means: I will almost not give any information about it in order to distinguish the sincere ones from the others. Most people only serve Him in the hope of reward or out of fear of His punishment—reward for obedience or punishment for disobedience. The sincerest deed is that which is done for the sake of God not out of desire for Heaven or out of fear of hell. If He hid and concealed the day of reward, those who worship sincerely would be distinguished from the others.

It is claimed that *akādu ukhfīhā* means, "I almost hid it from myself". This is an exaggerated expression of concealment. When someone wants to exaggerate about concealing something, he says: "I almost hid it from myself", meaning, "how I could show it to anyone else?" This is attributed to (an) oral tradition.

His Words, *so that every soul may be rewarded as it strives* are the dependent object of coming (*ātiyah*) (of the hour). The meaning is clear.

فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

(20:16) ***Therefore let not him who believes not in it*** **(bihā)** ***and follows his low desires turn you away from it*** **(ʿanhā)** ***so that you should perish.***

The word *ṣadd* means turning away. *Radā* means perishing. The two pronouns—*ʿanhā* (from it) and *bihā* (in it) refer to the Hour. *Al-ṣadd*

ʿ*an al-sāʿah* means turning away from remembering the Hour and its importance because it is the day on which every soul will be rewarded as it has strived. Similarly, not believing in it is disbelief in the same and its importance.

His Words, *and follows his low desires* are like an explanatory phrase joined with a conjunction to, *who believes not in it,* that is not believing in it is an example of following one's low desires. Because on that basis it would be a suitable explanation, the words would mean that low desires are the reason for not believing in it. It could be understood from that—by implication—that believing in the Hour is the truth which saves one from perishing, contrary to low desires.

In summary, the verse means: If the Hour is coming, and punishment and reward are going to be meted out, you should not be diverted from believing in it and its importance by those who followed their low desires, started to disbelieve in it and eventually turned their backs on serving their Lord. You should not be deterred from it to the extent that you turn away and perish.

The reason for using the past tense in, *wa [i]ttabaʿa hawāh,* follows his low desires, even though the phrase joined to it with a conjunction is in the present tense, may be to allude to following low desires causing a lack of belief.

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾

(20:17) ***And what is that*** **(tilka)** ***in your right hand, O Moses!***

This begins the revelation of the Message with the revelation of the Prophethood having come to a conclusion in the previous three verses. The interrogative is [in order] to confirm. He was asked what was in his right hand—his staff—so that he would say what it was, mention its characteristics so that it would be made clear that it was inanimate—non-living—and that its transformation into a serpent would have its desired impact on his soul.

It is likely that the noun to which the demonstrative pronoun "that" refers to is the stick (ʿ*ūdah*) [feminine] or piece of wood (*khashaba*) [feminine]. Otherwise, the word "that" would have been masculine (*dhālika*) instead of feminine (*tilka*), making the noun to which the demonstrative pronoun refers to, *al-shayʾ* (the thing) [masculine] because of the pretence

not to know it was a staff. [In such a case the masculine demonstrative pronoun has to be used]. If not, the question is wrong. An example [of using the masculine demonstrative pronoun] is: *Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my Lord? Is this the greatest?* (6:78); *Fa lammā raʾā al-shams* [feminine] *bāzighatan qāla hādhā* [masculine demonstrative] *rabbī. Hādhā* [masculine demonstrative] *akbar*.

The feminine demonstrative pronoun (*tilka*) may be used to refer to *al-ʿaṣā* (staff) but not with the motive of ascertaining what it is called and its essence—which would render the question redundant—but rather with the intention of having him mention its qualities and characteristics. This is supported by the verbosity of what Moses says, citing the staff's attributes and characteristics because when he heard the question about what was in his right hand that is his staff, no mind could have any doubt that what was required was to cite its attributes. He thereafter began saying what it was called (*ismuhā*), then its attributes and characteristics. This is a technique used when a question is asked about something obvious, ignorance of which is not expected. Somewhat similar to this are His words: *The terrible calamity! What is the terrible calamity! And what will make you comprehend what the terrible calamity is? The day on which men shall be as scattered moths.* (101:1-4); *The sure calamity! What is the sure calamity! And what would make you realize what the sure calamity is!* (69:1-3).

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾

(20:18) *He said: This is my staff: I recline on it and I beat the leaves with it to make them fall upon my sheep, and I have other uses for it.*

[The word] *al-ʿaṣā* is well known. It is an unmarked feminine [noun]. *Al-tawakkī* and *al-ittikāʾ ʿalā al-ʿaṣā* both mean leaning on [the staff]. *Hashsh* means beating or hitting the leaves of a tree with a staff to make them fall upon sheep for them to eat. *Maʾārib* is the plural of *maʾrabah*, *maʾrubah* and *maʾribah*, meaning a need. His *maʾārib* being *fīhā* [lit. in it] means that his needs are dependent on it insofar as it is a means to achieve them. The meaning of the verse is clear.

It is said that his verbosity—prolonging the citation of the staff's attributes and characteristics—was because in the context of communicating

and confiding with the Beloved, it necessitated that, since speaking to the Beloved is pleasurable. That is why he first said that it was his staff to derive from that its general benefits. This is the point of saying that it is his staff.

In discussing the end of the previous verse above, another reason was given for this question and its answer. Speaking about it does not fall under the heading of verbosity—especially with regard to his summarizing all its uses by saying, *and I have other uses for it.*

A subsequent explanation was provided for the question and response noted in the discussion at the end of the previous verse. Speaking about it (in that manner) would not fall under the heading of verbosity—especially in regards to his summarizing all of its benefits by saying, *and I have other uses for it.*

قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾

(20:19-21) ***He said: Cast it down, O Moses! So he cast it down; and lo! it was a serpent running. He said: Take hold of it and fear not; We will restore it to its former state.***

A *ṣirah* is a state. Etymologically, it is a construction for a type (*naw'*) of *ṣayr* (course) the same way that *jalsah* is a type (*naw'*) of *julūs* (sitting).

He commanded Moses to cast down his staff from his right hand—He said: *Cast it down, O Moses!* When he did so, it became a serpent moving swiftly and actively. That was something unexpected from an inanimate object—*So he cast it down; and lo! it was a serpent running.* He refers to its moving elsewhere: *… he saw it in motion as if it were a serpent.* He also speaks of the serpent in another place (28:31): *So he threw his rod, then lo! it was a clear serpent* (thuʿbān). A *thuʿbān* is a mighty serpent. *Take hold of it and fear not; We will restore it to its former state* (7:107)(26:32), indicates that he feared of the moving serpent he saw. He tells the story elsewhere: *So when he saw it in motion as if it were a serpent, he turned back retreating, and did not return. O Moses! come forward and fear not* (28:31).

Khawf (fear) means beginning the preparatory steps of avoiding evil, not *khashyah* which means the heart being agitated and upset which is a vice incompatible with the virtue of courage—unlike *khawf*. *Khawf* is permissible for the Prophets but not *khashyah*—as God says: *Those who deliver the messages of God and fear Him* (wa yakhshawnahu), *and do not*

fear (wa la yakhshawna) *anyone but God* (33:39).

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾

(20:22) ***And press*** **(damma)** ***your hand to your side, it shall come out white without evil: another sign:***

The root *damma* means to join. *Janah* means a bird's wing, the hand, upper arm or armpit. The intended meaning may be the latter to refer back to what He says elsewhere: *Enter your hand into the opening of your bosom* (27:12, 28:32).

Sū' means any badness or unpleasantness. It is claimed that it is an allusion in the verse to leprosy. It means: Tuck your hand under your armpit, that is, enter it into the opening of your bosom. It shall come forth white without leprosy or any other evil state. The words, *another sign* are a circumstantial phrase describing the state of the subject of the verb *takhruj,* it shall come out. There is an allusion in it to the fact that the staff's becoming a serpent was the first sign and the white hand is another sign. He says about this: … *so these two shall be two arguments from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs* (28:32).

لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾

(20:23) ***That We may show you*** **(li nurīyaka)** ***of Our greater signs.***

The *lām* is explanatory. The sentence is connected to an implied [phrase] as if to say: "We made what happened with your hand to show you some of Our greater signs".

اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٢٤﴾

(20:24) ***Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits.***

This is regarding the Messengership[1]. The previous verses—*And what is that in your right hand, O Moses!* … were a prelude to it.

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٩﴾ هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾

1 In Biblical terms, an Apostolic mission. (Ed.)

اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِى ﴿٣١﴾ وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِى أَمْرِى ﴿٣٢﴾ كَىْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

(20:25-35) ***He said: O my Lord! Expand my breast for me, And make my affair easy to me, And loose the knot from my tongue, (That) they may understand my word; And give to me a helper from my family: Aaron, my brother, Strengthen my back by him, And associate him (with me) in my affair, So that we should glorify You much, And remember You oft. Surely, Thou art seeing us.***

These eleven verses are a record of what Moses asked his Lord for when it was decreed upon him to become a Messenger. Ostensibly, they are linked to the matter of his mission because he was very much in need of them in communicating the Message to Pharaoh and his chiefs, saving the Israelites and regulating their affairs, but not in the matter of Prophethood.

This is supported by the fact that he did not make these requests after his appointment as a Prophet (*nabī*) in the three verses above [14-16], but he started with these requests when he was appointed as a Messenger (*rasūl*) and was told: *Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits* which is the objective of the Message. True, the first four verses [25-28] are not entirely free of a link to the Prophetic mission which constitutes receiving religious doctrines and practical laws from the divine domain.

O my Lord! Expand my breast for me: The word *sharḥ* means expanding. The sentence is an example of an imaginative metaphor. The metaphor, by way of metonymy—as if the heart nestled within the human breast—is a vessel which stores whatever comes to it by way of observation and perception. Subsequently, the secret is stored within it, but if it is a tremendous affair and becomes difficult for a person, or is above his capability, then his breast will become straitened. Essentially, it is not wide enough for him and he will need it to be expanded until it is.

Moses perceived the Messengership, which his Lord had decreed for him, to be overwhelming. He knew the might and power of the tyrannical Coptic nation (native Egyptian population/people in Roman Egypt), the head of which was the despotic Pharaoh, who challenged God's divinity and proclaimed: "I am your lord, the most high". He was aware of the state of the Israelites—weak and enslaved among Pharaoh's family (tribe), ignorant and intellectually inferior.

It was as though he could foresee the trials and tribulations that would result from this mission and witness the consequences of communicating this Message—atrocities and calamities. He was a man with little tolerance, quick to ire for the sake of God, who denounced oppression and had a distaste for injustice—as evidenced by the story of his killing the Egyptian and his drawing water from the Midian watering hole. He—the sole weapon for anyone who wanted to invite and propagate—had a knot in his tongue, which may have prevented him from elucidating what he wanted to make clear.

Therefore, he asked his Lord to resolve these issues by first asking for his breast to be expanded in order [to withstand] the weight of his Lord's Message, which he was to bear and to help him face the disasters and difficulties on his propagative journey. Accordingly, he said, *O my Lord! Expand my breast for me.* After which, he said, *And make my affair easy for me*, that is the responsibility of the Message, He had charged him with. He did not ask Him to lighten the mission and relinquish to a certain extent, what He had commanded him with, so that he could persuade (the people) to accept something lesser, thereby making his delivery of the Message easier in itself, when it should have been considered as weighty.

He only asked God to simplify and lighten it for him notwithstanding its difficulty and great significance. The proof can be derived from the words, *wa yassir lī,* (and make … easy to me). The reason why this attests to it, is because *lī* (to me)—along with the given context—distinctly renders a meaning as follows: "Make my affair easy for me—the one whom You have placed in this position and ladened with the mission that You have charged me with". Obviously, this entreaty means to make the affair effortless in relation to him and not to make it inherently easy.

Something similar can be said about, *Expand … for me*, because it means: "Expand my breast for me whom You have entrusted with the Message before which are difficulties and adversities so that it [my breast] is not straitened if they [difficulties and adversities] swarm and descend on me. If, "Lord, expand my breast and make my affair easy", had been said, this subtle point would have been missed.

And loosen the knot from my tongue is another request he makes—referring to a knot [hitch] in his tongue. The indefiniteness of *ʿuqdah* is to indicate a specific character. It has an implied attribute which appears from His Words, *(That) they may understand my word*, that is, a knot which

prevents my words from being comprehended.

And give to me a helper from my family, Aaron, my brother is yet another request he makes—the fourth and final one. *Wazīr* is of the *faʿīl* form [derived] from *wizr* which means a heavy weight. A *wazīr* is so-called because he bears the weight of the king's load. [Alternatively,] it is claimed that it is [derived] from *wazar* meaning a mountain which one takes refuge in. Thus, [A *wazīr*] is so-called because the king takes refuge in him with regard to his views and rulings.

In summary, he is asking his Lord to give him a helper from his family. He makes it clear that it is Aaron (Hārūn), his brother. The only reason he requests his support is because the mission is multi-faceted and extensive and Moses cannot execute it alone. On the contrary, he needs an associate to partake in it with him, execute some of the mission, relieve him through his partner's accomplishments and essentially be a support to Moses in regards to what Moses is carrying out. This is what His Words, *Strengthen my back by him, And associate him (with me) in my affair* mean—they are like an explanation for making him a helper.

And associate him (with me) in my affair, is a request for him to be made an associate in an affair exclusive to him that is communicating what had initially reached him from his Lord, which was exclusive to him and was not shared by anyone else. He was not entitled to appoint anyone else as a deputy. As for conveying the religion or some aspects of it after its having arrived through the intermediary of a Prophet, it is not exclusive to a Prophet. On the contrary, it is the responsibility (*waẓīfah*) of everyone who believes in it and who knows something about the religion. One who is aware has a duty to inform one who is ignorant. Those who are present have to advise those who are absent. It would be illogical to request that his brother assist him in an affair, which was not exclusive to him, but rather was common to him, his brother and everyone who believed in it—having to guide, teach, explain and communicate. Therefore, it is apparent that his being involved in his mission means that he would convey a portion of what was revealed to Moses and everything else conferred upon him by his Lord, for example having to be obeyed and authoritative in his word.

As for his being assisted in Prophethood, especially in the sense of receiving revelation from God , Moses did not fear doing that alone such that he should ask for an associate. He only feared being on his own in communicating and regulating affairs to save the Israelites and anything

pertaining to that. This is related from Moses himself: *And my brother, Aaron* (Hārūn), *he is more eloquent of tongue than I, therefore send him with me as a helper, verifying me* (28:34).

Furthermore, authentic narrations from both sects state that the Prophet uttered this very same supplication (*duʿāʾ*) for ʿAlī even though he was not a Prophet.

So that we should glorify You much, and remember You oft: Given the context, this is apparently the purpose of making Aaron his helper: so that they may both glorify God and they may both remember Him. Otherwise, to glorify and remember God together has nothing to with the contents of the previous requests, namely; expanding his breast, making his affair easy and loosening the knot from his tongue. On that basis, glorifying (*tasbīḥ*) and remembering (*dhikr*) means their freeing God (from having partners) together and mentioning Him openly among the people, as opposed to when they were alone or secretly in their hearts, which would have had nothing to do with making him an associate. On the contrary, it means for them to praise and remember Him together, among the people, in their gathering places and councils and at any of their assemblies where they were both attending. This would increase their invitation to believe in God and renounce any partners.

This connects the end of his supplication with its beginning. It is as if he is saying: Verily, the circumstance is very serious. The tyrant, his chiefs and the nation's might and authority have deluded them. Polytheism and idolatry are rooted within their veins and hearts, resulting in forgetting the remembrance of God completely. The Israelites' eyes have become filled with the vision of Pharaoh's strength and the might of his chiefs, while their hearts marvel at the influence of Pharaoh's family. Their souls have become saturated with fear of their authority and therefore have forgotten God and only think about the tyrant. Therefore, this affair is the Messengership and (in order) to proceed and succeed, the propagation desperately requires that you declare [God] to be Unique by repeatedly denying Him having any partners and your habitual mention of His being the Lord and God, among them so that they might reflect and believe. On my own, I am not strong enough for this affair, so make Aaron my helper, support me with him and make him an associate in my mission, so that we should glorify You much and remember You often, haply the striving may be beneficial and prosperous.

With this explanation, it has become clear:

(1) How this purpose, that is, *So that we should glorify You …* is linked to what precedes it.

(2) The reason why *katszhīran* appears twice but does not in the least constitute repetition is because both glorification and remembrance *per se* have to be abundant. If *kay nusabbiḥaka wa nadhkuraka* ("so that we should glorify you and remember you") had been said, it would have meant their cumulative abundance which is not what is intended.

(3) The reason why *tasbīḥ* is placed before *dhikr* is because *tasbīḥ* means freeing Him of having a partner by refuting the divinity of all gods apart from God, disproving their being worthy of lordship so that the invitation to believe in God alone can take place—which is what *dhikr* means in this context. Thus *tasbīḥ* is like stopping the impediment advancing on the cause's (*muqtaḍā's*) effect. Other explanations have been given for these particulars and are referred to in extensive books. There is no point in referencing them or in citing them here.

Surely, Thou art seeing us: It appears to be the reason or like the proof of (the clause), *So that we should glorify You much …* meaning: "Surely You witness me and my brother since our creation and introduced Yourself to us and are aware that we worship You with glorification and remembrance, earnestly striving at that. So, if You make him a helper for me, support me through him and associate him in my affair, the mission of propagation would be accomplished and we would glorify You much and remember You oft". On this basis, the pronoun "us" refers to him and his brother. [Alternatively] *binā* could mean his family, meaning: "Surely You witness us, the People of the Household and we are people who glorify and remember [You], so if You make my brother Aaron—who is from my family—a helper for me, we will glorify You much and remember You oft". This explanation is better than the previous one because it also provides a full explanation of the point in mentioning his "family" in the previous clause, *And give to me a helper from my family: Aaron, my brother*. This is something the reader should ponder upon.

قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾

(20:36) ***He said: You are indeed granted your petition, O Moses.***

It is an answer to all his supplications. It is imperative—like the

aforementioned, *And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed.*

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

(20:37) ***And certainly We bestowed on you a favor at another time.***

He is reminding him of another favor bestowed upon him before choosing him for the Prophethood and the Message and granting his petition. He bestowed it upon him when he was born—one of the soothsayers had told Pharaoh that there would be born among the Israelites a child at whose hands his kingdom would come to an end. Pharaoh then ordered that every newborn among them was to be killed. They killed newborn sons up until Moses was born. God revealed to his mother not to fear, to suckle him, and, if she feared for him due to Pharaoh's agents and spies, to put him in the chest and cast it into the Nile, for the open sea to carry him to the shore next to Pharaoh's palace so that he would adopt him as a son—him being childless—and would not kill him. Then, God will return him [to his mother].

She did as was revealed to her so when the chest was carried by the Nile's current, she sent one of her daughters—Moses' sister—to survey his surroundings. So she walked around Pharaoh's palace until she found a group seeking—by Pharaoh's command—a nursemaid to breastfeed Moses. The sister of Moses then directed them to her mother so they sought her as a nursemaid. She took her son and her eye was cooled by him. God kept His promise and He favored Moses greatly.

And certainly We bestowed on you a favor at another time—a favor that He did for him at the beginning of his life. There is a change from the first person singular to the majestic plural because the context indicates grandeur. He is informing [him] of His full power by way of foiling Pharaoh, the tyrant's effort and thwarting his plot to suppress God's Light, by turning his plot against him and raising [bringing up] his enemy on his own lap. As for the occasion when Moses is addressed in the second person and spoken to—*Surely I* [first person singular] *am your* [second person] *Lord*—the first person singular is more appropriate.

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾ أَنِ اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ
فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ ۚ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً

مِنِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾

(20:38-39) ***When We revealed to your mother what was revealed. Saying: Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river* (Yamm)*, then the river shall throw him on the shore; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him, and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes.***

"When We revealed" means a form of inspiration which is cast into the heart when [the person] is either asleep or awake. *Waḥy* (revelation) in His Words is not restricted to Prophetic revelation, as He says: *And your Lord revealed to the bee* (16:68).

As for Prophetic revelation, women do not become Prophets and they do not receive that via revelation as He says: *And We have not sent before you but men from (among) the people of the towns, to whom We sent revelations* (12:109).

Saying: ('an') *Put him into a chest …* is the content of what was revealed to Moses' mother. The particle *an* (lit. "that") is explanatory. [Alternatively] it is said that it is *maṣdarīyyah*, which is linked to "We revealed". The implied meaning is *uḥī bi an iqdhifīh …* (I revealed: Put him …). It is claimed that the particle *an* is *maṣdarīyyah*, meaning that it turns the verb that follows it into an infinitive which would be the object of *ma yūḥā* (what was revealed). A *tābūt* is a chest or similar such [object]. *Qadhf* means putting or casting. Apparently the first *qadhf* in the verse means the former [that is to put] whereas the second *qadhf* means the latter [that is to cast]. It is possible that they could both mean the latter, metaphorically—putting the child in the chest and casting it in the river is casting and throwing him away without caring about what happens to him.

Yamm means a great river. It is said [that it means] a great sweet water river. *Sāḥil* means riverbank and its bank on the land. *Ṣunʾ* and *ṣanīʾah* both mean doing good. *Then the river shall throw him* is an imperative used to allude to its actually happening. It means: We commanded the river—by way of a generative decree (*amr takwīnī*)—to do so; it is an unavoidable decree. Thus, *there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me*, is the consequence of this decree in this conditional sentence.

The two verses mean: "When We revealed to your mother what was revealed, and inspired her by what was inspired—to put him or cast him

in the *tābūt* (chest)—So cast him in the *yamm*,—the great river, that is, the Nile—it was decreed by Us that the great river would cast him to the edge of the shore. He would be taken up by Pharaoh, an enemy of Mine and his—because he used to be an enemy to God by claiming divinity, and to Moses, who was a child, by killing newborns. This is what We revealed to your mother".

And I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes: It is apparent from the context that this section, up to, *and she would not grieve* is a second section which follows the previous one, thereby concluding it. The combined result is an explanation of the favor referred to in, *And certainly We bestowed on you a favor at another time.* The first section tells the story of the revelation to his mother to put him in the chest, then in the great river so that he would ultimately reach Pharaoh, an enemy of God and Moses, so he could be taken by him. The second section tells the story of casting love down upon him so that Pharaoh would be distracted from killing him and be kind to him until the affair concluded with his being returned to his mother and his settling on her lap to cool her eye, so she would not grieve. God had promised her that as mentioned in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ (The Narratives): *So We gave him back to his mother that her eye might be refreshed, and that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of God is true* (28:13).

This means that the phrase, *and I cast down upon you …* has to be linked by the conjunction to, *We revealed to your mother*. Casting love down from Him means his being such that everyone who sees him, [falls in] love with him—as if divine love has settled on him, making the gaze of any onlooker unable to fall upon him without love attaching to his heart and drawing him to Moses. There is imagery (*istiʿārah takhyiliyyah*) in these words. Using *maḥabbah* (love) in the indefinite, there is an allusion to its magnificence and the inquisitiveness of its affair. The *lām* in *wa li tuṣnaʿa ʿalā ʿaynī* (and that you might be brought up before My eyes) is purposeful. The phrase is joined with a conjunction to implied words, namely: "And I cast down upon you love from Me for matters x and y so that kindness would be done to you (*ʿalā ʿaynī*) that is seen by Me [to be done to you]. Surely, I am with you, observing your state and not heedless of you because of the extra attention I pay to you and the compassion which [I show] you". It may be claimed that *li tuṣnaʾa ʿalā ʿaynī* means kindness to him by returning him to his mother and putting his upbringing in

her lap. Whatever the case may be, this discourse is one of complete care and compassion appropriate to the context of the first person singular. That is why He switched to it from the majestic plural.

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ
أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ
فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

(20:40) ***When your sister went and said: Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him? So We brought you back to your mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve and you killed a man, then We delivered you from the grief, and We tried you with (a severe) trying. Then you stayed for years among the people of Midian; then you came hither as ordained, O Moses.***

The space/time qualifier (*ẓarf*), as indicated by the context is linked to *wa li tuṣnaʾa* (and that you might be brought up). It means: "And I cast love down upon you from Me [so that] everyone who sees you will [fall in] love [with] you because of x and y and I will see and watch them being kind to you when your sister proceeds to ascertain news of you and your state. She will then find Pharaoh's workers seeking a nursemaid to breast feed you and she will tell them—the future tense used to tell the story of the past situation—suggesting to them: Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him that is upbringing and breast-feeding. Thus, We returned you to your mother that she might be happy and not sad". The use of the majestic plural in, *So We brought you back* is a return to the previous thread of the majestic plural. It is not a grammatical shift for rhetorical effect (*iltifāt*).

The words, *and you killed a man, then We delivered you from the grief* is an allusion to another favor or [other] favors following the previous two favors. This is the story of his slaying the Egyptian, the council's decision to execute him, his flight from Egypt, herding Jethro's [Shuʾayb's] flocks, his marrying Prophet Jethro's daughter and staying with him and among the people of Midian for ten years, as a hired hand. The story is referred to in detail in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ (The Narratives).

And you killed a man means his killing the Egyptian in Egypt. The words, *then We delivered you from the grief* mean what he feared—the

council of Pharaoh's family executing him. God then made him exit for the land of Midian. Thereafter, when [Prophet] Jethro summoned him and he came to him and narrated the story, he said: "Fear not, you have escaped the wrongdoing people".

And We tried you with (a severe) trying means We tested and tried you with a test and trial.

Al-Rāghib says in *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān*: *Fatn* originally meant putting gold in the fire to distinguish good [gold] from bad. It was used for putting a person in the fire. He says: *[It is] the day on which they shall be tried* [yuftanūn] *at the fire* (51:13); *Taste your persecution* [fitnatakum] that is your punishment. Sometimes, they refer to that from which punishment derives as *fitnah* and so they substitute one for the other, like (51:14): *Surely into trial have they already tumbled down* and sometimes for testing like (9:49): *and We tried you with [a severe] trying* [fatannāka Futūnan] (20:40).

Fitnah has been made like *balāʾ* insofar as they are both used for the hardship and ease which a person is pushed towards. More often than not, they are used to mean hardship. [However] He did say with regard to both: … *and We try you by evil and good by way of probation* (21:35).

Then you stayed for years among the people of Midian—follows on consequentially from the trial (*fitnah*).

Then you came hither **(ʿalā qadar)** ***as ordained, O Moses:*** It would not be surprising if, given the context, that *qadar* could be inferred to mean *miqdār* [lit., measure] that is, the knowledge and deeds he had achieved as a result of the trials which had befallen him in his escape from sorrow by leaving Egypt and staying among the people of Midian.

Thus, the sum total of what He says, *and you killed a man, then We delivered you … O Moses,* is one thing, namely, that he was tested with one trial after another until he came to *qadar* that is the actuality of perfection which he had acquired.

The objection to deeming *fitan* to be favor could be answered by saying that *fitan* here means purifying (*takhlīs*) similar to purifying gold with fire. It could also be answered by saying that it is favor on account of the reward consequential to it.

Both explanations are based on there being a full stop, *Then you stayed* … [in terms of recitation of the verse]. That is why one of the exegetes says that *fitnah* means the hardship which Moses endured after leaving Egypt until he settled in Midian because of the letter *fāʾ* (lit. "then" or "so")

denoting consequentiality in: *Then you stayed for years among the people of Midian* which indicates that the staying came after the *fitnah* in terms of time. The problem with this explanation is that the letter *fāʾ* only indicates one event being consequent to another, which is not always because of temporal order. One of them says that *qadar* means *taqdīr* (decree), meaning: Then you came to the land of Egypt according to what We ordained. He then objected to explaining *qadar* as *miqdār* (measure) by saying that it is *qadr* which has this meaning and not *qadar*. The problem with this explanation is that *qadr* and *qadar*, as it has been explicitly stated, like *naʾl* (sandal) and *naʾal* (sandal) both mean the same thing—as mentioned above. *Qadar* in the sense of measure fits the context better or else is the one to choose. Some other explanations, of less importance and of no avail, have been given for his coming to measure (*majīʿihi ʿalā miqdar*).

The description of God's favor upon Moses ends with calling his name, which is further exaltation of him.

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾

(20:41) ***And I have chosen you*** **(iṣṭanaʿtuka)** ***for Myself.***

Iṣṭināʿ (the root of *iṣṭanaʿtuka*) is in the form *iftiʿāl* and it means *iḥsān* (favor, grace, beneficence), as mentioned by lexicologists. *Ṣanaʿahu* means he did a favor for him. *Iṣṭanaʿahu* means his favor was realized about him and he proved it for him. It has been narrated from *al-Qaffāl*: It is said that one did *iṣṭināʿ* to so-and-so when he does good to him to the point that the person is ascribed to him, whereby it is said that so-and-so is his *ṣanīʿ* or *kharīj* [that is, his dependent].

Based on this meaning, God's *iṣṭināʿ* (choice) of Moses would effectively reduce to making him purely for Himself. This way the meaning of "for Myself" would be clearest. If the first meaning were to be adopted [that is, mere favor and beneficence, without the aspect of ascription and attachment] then it would have to implicitly convey the idea of purification (*ikhlāṣ*). Either way, the meaning is: "I chose you purely for Myself in terms of the bounties that you have. They are all My favor and from Me, without anyone else having a part in you. Thus you are purely Mine". This is matched by His Words (discussed above): *And mention Moses in the Book; surely he was chosen, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet* (19:51).

Some exegetes have said: *iṣṭināʿ* means *ikhtiār* (choosing), and choosing

him for Himself means making him an authority between Him and His creatures, such that his Words are His Words and his call is His call. Others have said that "for Myself" means for My revelation and Message. Others have suggested that "for Myself" means "for My love". However, all of these interpretations involve added conditions and qualifications in excess of what is in the verse.

The above also shows that His purification of him is among His favors upon him, rather the greatest bounty. It could also be that it is an explanatory addition for, *Then you came hither as ordained, O Moses*.

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī has said in his *Tafsīr* that God's *iṣṭināʿ* of Moses is part of His list of favors upon him. He has been objected [by Ālūsī] on the account that this *iṣṭināʿ* has been disconnected from the list by the call "O Moses" (20:40). Hence, it is better to interpret it as a preparatory remark for dispatching him toward Pharaoh with his brother's association.

The answer is that having the call in the middle is not necessarily as he has interpreted it. It could be that this call is an additional honor and grace. It could be a way of bringing him closer to a station of intimacy, to be followed by a switch of address from the first person plural to the first person singular where He says: *And I have chosen you for Myself*

اذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾.

(20:42) *Go you and your brother with My signs and be not remiss in remembering Me.*

It is a restatement of the previous commandment issued to Moses alone—*Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits*—saying the same but changing the address to include his brother to grant his petition for Aaron to be made an associate in his affair. Both of them are addressed this second time.

Their being commanded to take His signs [more than three]—even though only two signs had been shown by that time—is a beautiful promise to support them with others and that they will be brought to them when necessary. No attention should be paid on the claim that it means the two signs and that the plural sometimes refers to two, or, that the two signs can be broken down into many signs.

The words, *and be not remiss in remembering Me* is a prohibition on being heedless (*wany*). It fits the previous context best for *dhikr* to mean

invitation to believe in Him alone and not *dhikr* of Him in the sense of turning towards Him through one's heart or tongue as has been claimed.

اذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٤٤﴾

(20:43-44) *Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate; then speak to him a gentle word haply he may mind or fear.*

He includes both of them in the commandment again, therefore He addresses Moses and Aaron together. The same applies to the interdiction which precedes it—*and be not remiss*. There was a prelude to that in adding Aaron to Moses—*Go you and your brother*. It would not be surprising if it is a direct speech quotation of another dialogue and address which took place between Him and His two Messengers [together] or separately after that stage. This is supported by the context [provided by]: *Both said: O our Lord! Surely we fear that he may hasten to do evil to us…*

Then speak to him a gentle word forbids speaking harshly or sternly to him. It is one of the most compelling aspects of the etiquette of propagation.

The words, *haply he may mind or fear* is a hope that he will reflect or fear; He is "standing in the position of dialogue" not as He Who knows everything that will come to pass. "Minding" means yielding to the reminder so it is acceptance of, abiding by and believing in what the proof dictates of the person, who is doing the reminding. Fear is one of the precursors to acceptance and belief so ultimately it means: haply he may believe or come close to doing so and accede to some of your requests.

Claim: One of those who believes in the acceptance of Pharaoh's becoming a believer when he was drowning endeavors to rely on this verse as evidence on the basis of *laʿalla* (haply) meaning inevitably when God [says it]; this is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and the early exegetes. Therefore, the verse indicates the inevitability of one of the two—minding or fearing—which is what salvation revolves around.

Reply: It is impossible; when God says, *ʿasā* or *laʿalla*, it has the same meaning as when anyone else says them, that is, hope (*tarajjī*). The only difference is that the meaning of hoping (*tarajjī*) is not applicable to God; He is Holy and Transcendent of being ignorant of anything. When these expressions of hope appear in His speech, it means that if someone were

to stand in that position and learn about what is being said, he would understand the prospect of certain events. But when these expressions of hope appear in someone else's speech, they sometimes indicate the speaker's hope, not necessarily a hope implied and suggested by the speech.

Imam al-Razi says in his exegesis that he does not know the secret behind His sending him [Moses] to Pharaoh, knowing that he would not believe in God. There is no other recourse in this and similar places other than to accept and not object.

This [what Imam al-Razi says] is astonishing; if the secret behind His sending him means the reason why it is correct to order something, knowing that it is impossible for it actually to happen, the impossibility or necessity of something happening is only the state of the action with regard to its complete cause, that is, the agent and all the factors external to it with regard to its existence. A commandment is not linked to the deed with regard to its state in relation to all the parts of its complete cause. On the contrary, it is linked to it in terms of its state in relation to the agent, who is one of the parts of its complete cause. The action's relationship or lack thereof to it is contingent because it is an incomplete cause which does not necessitate the existence of the action or lack of it. Thus sending and propagation and similarly the commandment is correct with regards to Pharaoh because responding and following the order is a choice and is possible for him, even though with regards to him, in conjunction with all the other preventative factors it is impossible. This is the answer [given] by those who believe in free choice. As for the determinists (*al-mujabbīrah*)—of whom he is one—the error applies to all instances where duties are imposed because of the pervasiveness of the decree (*jabr*). They have responded to it—they claim—by saying that the imposition of duty is illusory, upon which completion of the proof and eliminating excuse depends.

If the secret behind sending [Moses] knowing that [Pharaoh] would not believe is the benefit in so doing—so as to prevent it from being in vain—true invitation, just as it has its effect on people by perfecting them in regards to prosperity, so too it has its effect on others by completing their misery. He says: *And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust* (17:82).

If there were no complete wretchedness, there would be no test, the case would not be complete and excuses would not be eradicated. If the

proof on one side is not complete and invalid it will clearly be of no avail on the other side.

قَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا نَخَافُ أَنْ يَفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطْغَىٰ ﴿٤٥﴾

(20:45) *Both said: O our Lord! Surely we fear that he may hasten to do evil to us* (yafruṭa ʿalaynā) *or that he may become inordinate* (an yaṭghā).

The word *farṭ* means preceding. What it means in the context of being made the equivalent of *ṭughyān* is hastening to punish and not delaying until the conclusion of the invitation and the manifestation of the miraculous sign. *Yaṭghā* means transgressing the bound in his tyranny, confronting the invitation by making the Israelites' punishment more severe and being more audacious to the All Holy than he had ever been before the invitation. There is no harm in attributing fear to them as discussed above in the explanation of, *Take hold of it and fear not*. There is difficulty (in understanding) the verse because He says elsewhere to Moses in response to his petition to make his brother an associate in his affair: *We will strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both an authority, so that they shall not reach you* indicating that they were given assurance at an earlier stage—*We will strengthen your arm with your brother*— (28:35) it would be illogical for them to show fear after that.

The answer is that their fear before that was for themselves as evidenced by what Moses said there: *And they have a crime against me, therefore I fear that they may slay me* (26:14).

That which is in this verse is their fear for the propagative mission (*daʿwah*)—as mentioned above. Furthermore, it is possible that the verse refers to two distinct fears that are bundled together: Moses' fear before, when he escaped and Aaron's fear after he was informed about his Messengership. As we mentioned above, it is possible that, *Go both to Pharaoh* up to the end of the verses is a narration of what they said though not necessarily all in one place.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا ۖ إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ ﴿٤٦﴾

(20:46) *He said: Fear not, surely I am with you both: I do hear and see.*

That is, do not fear his inordinateness and tyranny. Verily I am present

with you [two]. I hear what is said and I see what is (being) done. So go [both] forth and I will not forsake you. Thus it is an assurance of the promise to help. Hence, *Fear not* is assurance and *surely I am with you both, I do hear and see* is the reason for the assurance—being present, seeing and hearing. It is proof that the sentence is a metonymy for guarding and helping. Otherwise, being present *per se* and knowing applies to everything and [every] circumstance.

Some exegetes seek to rely on the verse as evidence that hearing and seeing are two additional attributes to knowledge on the basis of, *surely I am with you both* which is indicative of knowledge. If, *I do hear and see* were also indicative of it, it would mean repetition which is not the norm. This is [an example] of the weakest reasoning because:

(i) As the reader knows, *surely I am with you both* means being present and witnessing which is different to knowledge.

(ii) There are irrefutable proofs that the Essential Attributes like being Everliving, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All-Hearing and All-Seeing are all alike and collectively, equivalent to the Essence. Any inference which is based on the apparent meaning of the words—while being contradictory to definite proofs has no foundation

(iii) The matter pertains to fundamental beliefs, which cannot be established except by definite proof. Thus, linguistic principles like, that by default there is no repetition in speech cannot complete the argument here.

فَأْتِيَاهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ ۖ قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿٤٧﴾

(20:47) ***So go you both to him and say: Surely we are two messengers of your Lord; therefore send the children of Israel with us and do not torment them! Indeed we have brought to you a sign from your Lord, and peace is on him who follows the guidance.***

This renews the commandment for them to go to Pharaoh after their being assured and promised protection and help and explains all duties of their Messengership—to invite Pharaoh to believe and to desist from torturing the Israelites, and, to send them [the Israelites] with the two of them. Every time the situation changes in the dialogue, the commandment is repeated as appropriate, namely:

(i) To Moses: *Go to Pharaoh, surely he has exceeded all limits.*

(ii) When he uttered, his petitions—they were answered with: *Go you and your brother; Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate* followed by what He says when they refer to their fear and are answered with reassurance: *So go you both to him and say…* It details what they have to tell him.

The words, *So go you both to him and say: Surely we are two Messengers of your Lord* communicates that they are two Messengers of God. The subsequent words—*and peace is on him who follows the guidance …* are his call to the remaining articles of faith.

Therefore send the children of Israel with us and do not torment them is a secondary duty directed towards Pharaoh.

Indeed we have brought to you a sign from your Lord: Reliance on proof confirms their message. The word *āyah* in the indefinite keeps silent on the number and is an allusion to the grandeur of its affair, the greatness of its status and the clarity of its meaning.

The words, *and peace is on him who follows the guidance* is like a valedictory greeting by which the end of the message is indicated and explains the gist of what the religious invitation comprises, namely that peace and happiness are spread over whomever follows the guidance. He will not be confronted with any unpleasantness in the course of his life which he will dislike, either in this world or the Hereafter.

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾

(20:48) ***Surely it has been revealed to us that the chastisement will surely come upon him who rejects and turns back.***

It explains the previous [verse] that is, we only send peace on those who are guided because God revealed to us that chastisement—which is the opposite of peace—will come upon whoever rejects God's signs or the true invitation, which is guidance, and (whoever) turns back (*tawallā*). There is in the thread of the two verses [47-48] an obvious disdain for Pharaoh's affair and for the worldly embellishments—arrogance and conceit—with which he had adorned himself. The verse says *fa'tiyāhu* (So go you both to him), from *ityān*, instead of *idhhabā ilayhi* (go you both to him), from *dhihāb*. The difference is that the former shows a greater proximity, such that one makes contact with another. Going to Pharaoh who was the king of Egypt and the Egyptians' god was not that easy or simple.

Fa qūlā (and say) is said as opposed to *fa qūlā lahu* (and say to him) as if he is of no significance. *Surely we are two Messengers of your Lord and a sign from your Lord* are said, rapping his hearing twice by saying that he has a Lord—[Pharaoh's] being the one who used to call out: *I am your lord, the most high* (79:24).

And peace is on him who follows the guidance is said instead of addressing him in the second person. Similarly to it is, *that the chastisement will surely come upon him who rejects and turns back* without using the second person. All this is the most appropriate with regard to the complete knowledge, power and unchallengeable might alluded to by the tone of His words, *Fear not, surely I am with you both: I do hear and see.* In spite of that there is not an iota of harshness or any departure from a gentle word they are initially instructed [to utter] in anything they are commanded to say to him: *Surely we are two Messengers of your Lord …* (47-48). This is the word of truth that had to strike Pharaoh's hearing without any flattery, diffidence or intimidation due to the appearance of his false authority and vainglory.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Bāqir said about the (words of God), *I may bring to you therefrom a live coal*: (It means), I may bring you a live coal from the fire for you to warm up from the cold or find guidance at the fire. He (Moses) had lost the way. He (Moses) is saying: *Or I will find, over the fire, a way*.[1]

(2) Al-Ṣādiq was asked about His words, Mighty and Sublime is He: *therefore take off your shoes; surely you are in the sacred valley, Ṭuwā*. He replied: "They [the shoes] were made of the skin of a dead donkey". (*Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*)

Author's comment: It is also cited through an expedient (*mursal*) or ambiguous (*muḍmar*) narrations. This purport is also narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from ᶜAlī. Some oral traditions also say the same. The context of the verse gives the impression that taking off his shoes was out of respect for the [sacred] place.

(3) *Majmaᶜ [al-bayān]* says about: *keep up prayer for My remembrance*: It is said on the authority of most exegetes: It means

1 *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī within Abu al-Jārūd's narration

keep up prayer whenever you remember that you have to pray, whether it is time to do so or not. This is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir.

The above is supported by what Anas narrates on the authority of the Prophet : Whoever forgets a prayer should pray it when he remembers it. He will have to do no penance (*kaffārah*) apart from that. Muslim narrates it in [his] *Saḥīḥ*.

Author's comment: The hadith is narrated via other transmissions both with and without chains of narration on the authority of the Prophet through Ahl al-Sunnah and on the authority of the two Ṣādiqs through the Shiah.

(4) It is narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās about *Akādu ukhfīha*, *I almost hide it from Myself*: It is so in Ubayy's recitation. That is also narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

(5) It is narrated on the authority of Asmāʾ bint ʿUmays: I saw God's Messenger in front of [Mount] Thabīr [in Mecca], saying: May Thabīr shine, may Thabīr shine. O, God, I ask you by what my brother Moses asked you to expand my breast for me, to make my affair easy, to loosen a knot from my tongue [that] they might understand my word. Give to me a helper from my family, my brother ʿAlī. Strengthen my back by him and associate him [with me] in my affair, so that we should glorify You much, and remember You oft. Surely, You are seeing us. (*Al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: Something similar is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir and in *Majmaʿ [al-bayān]* on the authority of the Prophet .

(6) *Rūḥ al-maʿānī* says after citing the aforementioned hadith verbatim: Obviously here the affair should be construed as the affair of guidance and propagation. It cannot be construed as Prophethood and it is not correct to rely on it as evidence of ʿAlī's becoming the immediate successor to him after his death. The same [is true] with regard to what is authentically narrated—his telling him when he appointed him as deputy over the people of his household [when he went away to] the Battle of Tabūk: "Are you not content to be to me as Aaron was to Moses except that there is no Prophet after me"?

Author's comment: As for relying on this hadith or *hadith al-manzilah* (the tradition of status) [that is this last hadith] as evidence for his

becoming immediate successor, discussion of that is beyond the scope of this book. We shall only discuss what he means in his prayer for ʿAlī: "And associate him (with me) in my affair", matching Moses' prayer cited in the Mighty Book because it is connected to what he understood from the wording of the verse. The hadith is authentic and is supported by *hadith al-manzilah* which is reported by so many sources as to be considered widely-transmitted (*mutawātir*). What he means by the affair in: "And associate him [with me] in my affair" is definitely not Prophethood because of the explicit wording of *hadith al-manzilah* which excludes Prophethood. It is widely-transmitted proof that what Moses meant by the affair in, *And associate him (with me) in my affair* is not Prophethood. Otherwise, the Prophet's words would have been rendered without any useful meaning. Affair definitely does not mean any guidance and invitation to the truth as he [al-Alusī] says, because that is a duty carried out by the entire nation (*ummah*), others are associated with him and the Book and Sunnah prove it like: *Say: This is my way: I call to God, I and those who follow me being certain* (12:108), and his words narrated by both Sunnis and Shias: "Those present should convey (the message) to those (who are) absent".

If the affair were shared by everybody, it would be pointless to ask for ʿAlī to be associated with him in [his affair].

Furthermore, the annexation (*iḍāfah*) in, *amrī* (my affair), indicates exclusivity so it does not apply to something shared by everybody. Something similar can be said about Moses' words cited in the verse. True, initial propagation that is, the first communication of the revelation is an obligation exclusive to the Prophet so he is not entitled to seek the appointment of another man to propagate the revelation itself. Thus making him an associate in it means making him an associate in his mission. There is evidence of that in what Moses says, *And my brother, Aaron, he is more eloquent of tongue than I, therefore send him with me as a helper, verifying me*, because verifying him does not mean he is saying, "believe my brother". On the contrary, he [Aaron] is clarifying that which is vague in his [Moses'] statements, providing details and elucidating the points which may be unclear, in addition to conveying some of the revelation on his behalf, which had to be transmitted.

This type of communication and the properties of Prophethood which go with it like the duty to obey [him] are part of what is exclusive to the Prophet. Making him an associate in it means making him an associate

in his affair. This is what is meant by "affair" in his prayer. It—with the addition of Prophethood—is what is also meant in Moses' prayer.

A reference was made to the aforementioned discussion in (Ar. vol. 9 of) our book in the exegesis of the beginning of Sūrah al Barāʾah [The Immunity] regarding the hadith about the Prophet sending ʿAlī to Mecca with the primary verses from Barāʾah, after discharging Abu Bakr from doing so, on the basis of revelation sent to him—for it could only be communicated by him or someone like him (or assigned by him).

(7) al-Bāqir said: When his [Moses'] mother was pregnant with him, her pregnancy only showed when she gave birth to him. Pharaoh had assigned Egyptian women to the Israelite women to keep watch (over them). That was when it reached him that the Israelites were saying: There will be born among us someone called Moses son of Amram at whose hands will be the doom of Pharaoh and his companions. Pharaoh said thereat: I will kill their male newborns so that what they desire will not come to pass. He separated the men from the women and imprisoned the men in prisons. When Moses' mother gave birth to Moses, she looked at him and grieved for him. She was sorrowful, wept and said: He will be killed straight away. Thereafter, God made the (Egyptian) woman who was assigned to her incline towards him and so she said to Moses' mother: "What's wrong? Your color has turned white" She replied: "I fear that my son will be slaughtered". She then said: "Fear not". No one saw Moses except that he loved him, as God says, *and I cast down upon you love from Me*. Thus, the Egyptian woman assigned to her fell in love with him.[1]

(8) Mūsā ibn Jaʾfar was asked: Tell me about God's Words, Mighty and Sublime is He, *Go both to Pharaoh, surely he has become inordinate; then speak to him a gentle word haply he may mind or fear*. He replied: As for, *then speak to him a gentle word* it means address him by his teknonym (*kunyah*) and say to him: O, Abu Muṣʿab. Pharaoh's teknonym was Abu Muṣʿab—al-Walīd ibn Muṣʿab. As for His Words, *haply he may mind or fear* He only said [them] so as to be a greater motivation for Moses to go even though God,

1 *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī on the authority of al-Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb on the authority of al-ʿAlāʾ ibn Razīn on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Muslim

Mighty and Sublime is He, knew that Pharaoh would only mind and fear when he experienced the punishment. Do you not hear God, Mighty and Sublime when He says:

(10:90) … *until when drowning overtook him, he said: I believe that there is no god but He in Whom the children of Israel believe and I am of those who submit?* Then, God did not accept his belief and said:

(10:91) *What! now! and indeed you disobeyed before and you were of the mischief-makers.*[1]

Author's comment: The beginning of the hadith is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of ʿAlī. Explaining *al-qawl al-layyin* (a gentle word) as calling him by his teknonym (*kunyah*) is like citing an example because it is axiomatic that it is not restricted to that.

(9) The end of the hadith is also narrated in *al-Kāfī* on the authority of ʿAlī. Therein is support for what was stated above, namely, that *laʿalla* is used in the verse to express hope (*li al-tarajjī*).

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1 ʿ*Ilal [al-Sharāʾi]* via a chain of narration on the authority of Ibn Abi ʿUmayr

Verses 49-79

This is another section in Moses' life, describing Moses' and Aaron's dispatch to Pharaoh, where they convey their Lord's Message regarding the Israelites' exodus. The verses detail the account of their going to him, showing him God's signs, confronting the magicians, the truth prevailing and the submission of the magicians. The Israelites' night journey, the splitting of the sea, Pharaoh's pursuing them along with his armies and their being drowned are also alluded to.

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يَا مُوسَى ﴿٤٩﴾

(20:49) ***(Pharaoh) said: And who is your Lord, O Moses?***

[This is] a narration of the dialogue (that transpired) between Moses and Pharaoh. What they said to him is known from what He has stated—His command to both of them to go to Pharaoh, invite him to monotheism and speak to him about sending the Israelites with them. Therefore it is omitted because it is implied by Pharaoh's reply. It is evident from Pharaoh's reply that he was aware by way of their introduction, that they were associates in regards to the propagation. It was obvious that Moses was the primary executor and Aaron was his helper. That is why he addressed Moses alone but asked about their Lord. The propagative message which they were commanded to give him was, *Surely we are two Messengers of your Lord; therefore send the children of Israel with us and do not torment them! Indeed we have brought to you a sign from your Lord* … The word *Rabbika*, your Lord, was directed at Pharaoh twice, because he did not believe he had a Lord. Instead, he had convinced himself of being their lord and of the nation's, as some of his reported statements indicate: *I am your lord, the most high* (79:24)*; If you will take a god besides me, I will most certainly make you one of the imprisoned* (26:29).

In that setting it would have been more appropriate for him to say: "And who is my Lord, Who you claim is a Lord to me?" or something to that effect. It alludes to his feigning indifference to God being his Lord, as though he had not heard them say: "Your Lord", and inquiring about their Lord, Whose Messengers they were.

It was an incontrovertible fact among idolatrous nations that the Creator of everything was a truth exalted beyond measure and too great for minds to comprehend or to be imagined. Thus, it was impossible [for them] to turn to Him through worship or to achieve closeness to Him through any means of seeking proximity, and therefore He could not be adopted as god or lord. Rather, it was necessary to direct one's attention of worship and sacrifice towards one of His favored creation, for them to bring the person closer to God by interceding on his behalf, with his Lord. They were gods and lords. God is not a god or lord but just the God of gods and Lord of lords. Someone's saying: "I have a lord", would just mean one of the gods, not God. He would not mean God and that would not be understood from what he said in their conversations.

Pharaoh's words, *And who is your Lord* are not the denial of the existence of a Creator of everything or a denial of his having a god as is clear from his (other) words: … *and to forsake you and your gods* (7:127).

It is merely a request by him to know about Whom they had adopted as God and Lord. This is what was meant above by Pharaoh's feigning inadvertence in saying this about their invitation to God at the beginning of the propagation. He reckoned—albeit as someone feigning ignorance—that Moses and his brother were calling him to one of the gods taken as lord amongst themselves and not God, so he could ask about him. Sophistication in adopting gods—each of them adopting whom they liked as god—was the idolaters' custom. They may have swapped one god for another and so that was their way. The chiefs' words, *and to take away your best traditions* will follow. True, commoners among them may have uttered some of what was not in conformity with their fundamental [beliefs] for example attributing creation and regulation to the idols themselves as opposed to those idolized.

In summary, their religion was to absolve God of the [possibility of being] worshiped and of closeness to Him being achievable. They could only come near to Him through the intercession of some of His creatures such as Angels, jinn and holy people. Many of them believed that their great kings were manifestations of the magnanimity of divinity and worshiped them on the same level as the rest of the gods and lords. However, that would not stop the worshiped king from adopting one of the gods and worshiping him. Thus, he would be both a worshiper of his lord and an object of worship to others among the flock, just like the case of the

lord of the house in the ancient Roman Empire, most of whom were being Sabaean idolaters; Moses' Pharaoh was a deified king who worshiped idols as evidenced by the noble verses.

Thus, [the problem with] what many exegetes say about him [that is Pharaoh] is clear. *Rūḥ al-maʿānī* says: "Some of them believe that Pharaoh was well aware of God . He was just obstinate". They seek to rely on several verses as evidence of that, and, on the fact that his kingdom did not surpass Egypt nor reach the Levant. Do you not recall that when Moses fled to Midian, Jethro (Shuʿayb) told him: *Fear not, you are secure from the unjust people* (28:25). So how could he [Pharaoh] believe that he was the god of the world? He was rational and by necessity was accountable. Every rational being knows a priori that he came into existence following non-existence. Anyone like that is in need of a regulator. Therefore he believes in a regulator.

Some people say that he [Pharaoh] was ignorant of God after agreeing that a rational person cannot believe in his soul that he is the creator of the Heavens and the earth and everything between them. There is disagreement among the scholars about Pharaoh's ignorance. It is possible that he was materialist that denied the existence of a creator. It could be that he believed that a contingent being does not need a cause, and that the existence of the universe is coincidental, as it is attributed to Democritus and his followers.[1] It is conceivable that he was a philosopher, who believed in necessitating cause or that he was a star worshiper. He may have been an idol worshiper and it is possible that he was an anthropomorphist subscribing to reincarnation. As for his claim to lordship, it meant that everyone under his control had to obey and follow him and not (worship or) obey anyone else.

The reader by returning to the essence of the faith of the idolaters will realize that none of these opinions, possibilities or evidence that they rely on conform to the truth of the matter.

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِى أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَىْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى ﴿٥٠﴾

(20:50) ***He said: Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal):***

1 Democritus (d. 370 BC) was a Hellenic philosopher who believed that matter is made of indivisible units he called atoms. (Trans.)

This verse is a response to Pharaoh's question, *And who is your Lord, O Moses?* Given this context, "creation" in this verse is verbal noun and the pronoun "its" refers to "everything". Thus, it means the existence particular to the thing. *Hidāyah* means showing a thing the way to its objective and making it reach its goal [or objective]. Both explanations are in fact a single clarification, that is, a kind of making something reach its objective either independently or to be led to the path which ultimately leads to its goal. *Hidāyah* is said in regard to the recipient of the guidance and that to which it is guided. However, only the former is mentioned here. Therefore, it is referring to the guidance of everything to its goal, as mentioned before. Its objective is the purpose to which its existence and destination are linked. The primary objective of its creation is to reach the goal which has been established for it. Its guidance means that it is oriented towards it. This is based on a proper connection between a thing's creation and its purpose. In other words, the verse is referring to the connection that God has made between the properties and faculties of everything and their effects which allow it to journey towards the purpose of its existence. For instance, a human embryo which begins as a small drop of seed, is a form equipped in itself with faculties and limbs appropriate for the actions and effects which will ultimately take it to forming into a complete person, soul and body. The human sperm with its potential, has been given the particularities for its creation that is existence specific to humanity. The faculties and limbs it is equipped with are then guided and steered towards its objective, namely the purpose of human existence—the final perfection particular to this species.

Thus it is clear why "guided it" (*hadā*) is joined with the conjunction *thumma* (then) to, "gave to everything its creation" (*aʿtā kulla shayʿin khalqahu*) and that it means lower rank because a thing's course and movement comes after its existence in terms of rank. This sequence in physical existents is somewhat level and time based. It is also clear that guidance means general guidance which applies to everything, as opposed to particular guidance for humanity. This comes by resolving distinct instruction and casting off the specifics because the essence of human guidance is by showing them the way, which takes them to their objective. The path is the link between the object and its purpose gravitating towards its final goal. Everything is equipped with that which links it to something and moves it, towards its end. In the process it is being guided towards that thing.

All things are guided towards their perfection through the provisions it has been given and God is the Guide.

Thus the system of actions and reactions of things—or you can also say the specific system particular to each thing and the general system which comprises all specific systems –are an example of His guidance with regard to how their various parts are related and how things move from one part to another. From another perspective, it is an example of His regulation (*tadbīr*). Obviously His regulation ultimately leads to creation that is He to whom regulation of things is attributable is He Who brings the things themselves into being. Thus every existence or attribute of existence is attributable to Him and subsists through Him.

Therefore it is clear that the words, *Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it* consist of proof that He is the Lord of everything. There is no lord apart from Him. His having created all things and brought them into being means He owns their existence—because they subsist through Him—and to Him belong the regulation of their affair.

At this [juncture] it is clear that the words given their natural order and thread are appropriate to the context because the circumstance is one of an invitation to monotheistic belief and obedience to the Messenger. Pharaoh, in short, feigned inadvertence to His being his Lord and construed their words as an invitation to him to their Lord. He then asked, *And who is your Lord…?* It would have been appropriate to reply: "Our Lord is the Lord of the Worlds"—to include them, him and others altogether but the answer came more eloquently than that, *Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it*. The answer was given that He was the Lord of everything and in addition to that, proof was provided for this claim. If "Our Lord is the Lord of the Worlds", had been said, the claim alone would have been stated without the proof. This is something the reader should take note of. It is only guidance and not regulation which is affirmed in these words even though they both share the same place as referred to above because the context is one of propagation and guidance, and general guidance is more relevant to it.

This is what can be understood by reflection upon this noble verse. Thus the problem with all other explanations given for the verse is obvious, for example:

(i) *khalqahu* means like its creation—a spouse which is equivalent to the thing. It means: He Who gave everything a spouse. Thus it is like His

Words: *And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful* (51:49).

(ii) Everything means the kinds of blessing. It is the second object of *aʾṭā* (gave). *Khalq* (creation) means *makhlūq* (creature). It is the first object of *aʾṭā*. It means: He Who gave His creatures every blessing.

(iii) *Hidāyah* means guidance and proving His existence and Oneness without any partner. It means: He Who gave everything the existence that it calls for by its very capacity and potentiality. He then pointed to and proved His existence and Oneness through that.

Reflection on the above suffices to show the reader the invalidity of these explanations because they are such which are far from the context and restrictions to the wording of the verse whereas there should be none as such.

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٥١﴾

(20:51) *He said: Then what is the state* (bāl) *of the former generations?*

It is claimed that *bāl* originally meant thought. An example is what people say: *khaṭara bi bālī kadhā* (x came to mind). It was then used to mean state. It does not have a dual or plural form. The suggested plural *biʾālāt* is uncommon.

Moses' reply contained a sense of universal guidance which is not accomplished in humans except through Prophethood or resurrection because a monotheistic religion cannot be established without (the system of) reckoning, punishment and reward through which those who do good are distinguished from wrongdoers. That can only be accomplished by distinguishing what He commanded from what He forbade and what pleases Him from what angers [or displeases] Him. Furthermore, the word of propagation which they were commanded to pass on to Pharaoh contains an explicit reference to punishment at the end: *Surely it has been revealed to us that the chastisement will surely come upon him who rejects and turns back*. Idolaters deny that. That is why Pharaoh switched from talking about lordship (*rubūbīyyah*)—which had been put to an end by Moses' reply—to talking about resurrection. The question about it was based on skepticism. His question (was), *Then what is the state of the former generations?*—that is the state of the past human nations and

generations who had died and become extinct without any information or trace about them. How can they be punished and rewarded for their deeds if there is no doer in existence and no deed? Today, they are nothing but stories and myths. Thus, the verse is similar to what the polytheists are quoted as saying: *What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation?* (32:10)

The apparent meaning of these words is that they are based on [his] believing it to be unlikely due to the lack of knowledge of them and their deeds because of death and the passage of time (*fawt*) as evidenced by Moses' reply: *He said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book …* He answered his question by confirming His absolute, detailed knowledge of those past centuries.

قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ ۖ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾

(20:52) *He said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a book, my Lord errs not, nor does He forget.*

Knowledge is mentioned unconditionally and in an absolute sense. This implies that He does not miss any knowledge about any of those individuals or their actions. The verse also says that this knowledge is "with God", which shows that He does not lose it and does not disappear from Him. He said, *and what is with God is enduring*. He then qualifies that by saying, *in a Book*—as if it is a state of knowledge—to confirm thereby that it is recorded and kept without its state changing. *Kitāb* (book) is in the indefinite to indicate the magnificence of its affair with regard to the extent and precision of its comprehensiveness such that: …*it does not omit a small one nor a great one, but numbers them (all)* (18:49).

The words can be explained as saying that punishment or reward of the earlier generations would be problematic only if one did not know them. However, they are known to their Lord and recorded with Him in a book which is not assailed by error, change, missing [information] or erasure.

According to some exegetes, this sentence first negates God's ignorance from the beginning, and then His ignorance after knowing. However, apparently both parts are meant to negate ignorance after knowledge. *Ḍalāl* (erring, going astray) is to seek a goal by treading a path that does not reach it but goes somewhere else. When talking about knowledge,

ḍalāl means taking something instead of something else. This happens when the object of knowledge, in the sense that it is known, changes from what it was originally in the knower's knowledge. *Nisyān* (forgetting) is when something goes out of one's knowledge after being in it. Therefore, both of them are forms of ignorance after knowledge. The negation of this ignorance affirms God's knowledge at the beginning. Hence, the verse as a whole implies: God is knowledgeable about the former generations and ignorance after knowing cannot ever reach him. Thus, he can reward and punish them based on [His] knowledge.

This clarifies that, *My Lord errs not, nor does He forget* complements the verse. It is as if this sentence is meant to answer a potential objection that could be raised: Even though He knew about them some day they have now ceased to exist, their traces have disappeared and nothing about them can be discerned. So the verse answers: "He does not mix anything about them or about their properties and actions due to an erroneous change, and He does not miss them due to forgetfulness". That is why this sentence is not annexed to the previous part by the conjunction "and".[1]

The verse affirms God's knowledge and negates His ignorance by referring to Him as the Lord. This is to indicate the proof of what is claimed. This is because it is impossible to assume someone to be a lord yet be ignorant of what he owns. A lord (*rabb*) is the owner of something and the director of its affairs. The assumption of God's Absolute Lordship of everything necessitates that all things are owned by Him and depend on Him in every aspect of their existence, and that He is the director of their affairs. This suffices to show that all things are known to Him. Any being that can be assumed anywhere is owned by Him, depends on Him in its existence, and is directed by His regulation. Nothing blocks or separates it from Him, and this is the very presence (*ḥuḍūr*) that we call knowledge. Now, if we suppose that something is unknown to Him due to error, forgetfulness or ignorance to from the beginning, then we are assuming it to be absent from Him, which is a contradiction.

He says "my Lord" twice in this verse. The second usage, as the exegetes have said, is the usage of the noun instead of a pronoun. Furthermore, he did not say "our Lord" as in the previous verse. This is because the

1 This shows that the sentence is not an additional point, but a continuation and completion of what was said before. (Trans.)

previous question was about the Lord that the two of them called toward. That is why he gave an answer according to the question. The meaning of that answer based on the context is: "The Lord that I and my brother call toward is such and such". This verse, however, is an answer to a question that pertains to the former generations, and the one who is describing this is Moses [alone]. Hence, it is as if he is saying: "The Lord that I am describing is Knowledgeable about them". This is understood from the word "my Lord" and could not be implied otherwise. The reader should contemplate on this subtle point.

The point in explicitly mentioning "my Lord" for a second time is similar to what was said about the first "my Lord". The idea that it is an example of using the noun instead of a pronoun can be challenged because the second sentence is separated from the first [they are not conjoined by "and"].[1]

Exegetes have differed and disagreed to a great extent in their opinions on the two verses—their explanations and what they believe to be possible. We have refrained from citing them because there is no benefit. One of the strangest opinions, held by many, is that Pharaoh's question to Moses, *Then what is the state of the former generations?*, pertains to the history of the past and extinct nations, an attempt to distract Moses by the useless account of the previous nations from his main message—speaking about the fundamentals of divine knowledge and demonstrating the explicit truth about matters of origin and resurrection (which are) denied by idolaters. Then, Moses' reply, *The knowledge thereof is with my Lord …* can be summarized as a knowledge of that to God—as it is of the unseen which is unknown to anyone apart from the great Knower of the unseen things.

الَّذِى جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْ نَبَاتٍ شَتَّىٰ ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي النُّهَىٰ ﴿٥٤﴾

(20:53-54) ***Who made the earth for you an expanse and made***

1 Based on the author's explanations, the verse can be interpreted as follows: The Lord that I am describing has knowledge of the former generations in a book, and by the way, I should clarify that the Lord that I am describing neither errs nor forgets. (Trans.)

for you therein paths and sent down water from the cloud; then thereby We have brought forth many species of various herbs. Eat and pasture your cattle; most surely there are signs in this for those endowed with understanding.

The reader already knows that his [Pharoah's] question, *Then what is the state of the former generations?* is linked to the universal guidance God is described with, including guiding Mankind to happiness in the Hereafter which is eternal life. Similarly his [Moses'] reply to him—*The knowledge thereof is with my Lord …* is also linked (to the same). Thus the clause, *Who made the earth for you an expanse,* continues the discourse about general guidance, mentioning prominent examples of that. Thus, God placed Mankind on the earth to live an earthly life and to take provision for his higher, Heavenly life like an infant settled in his cot being raised for a life nobler and more sublime than that. God has laid out paths for Mankind so that he may realize that between him and his objective—which is proximity to Him and entrance in the threshold of munificence—is a path which he must travel just as he travels paths on the earth for his earthly needs. He sends down water from the Heavens that is rainwater, which is the source of the water in the earth's springs, rivers and seas. He thus makes various kinds and similar species of plants grow from that, guiding you to eat them. These signs direct the possessors of intellect to His guidance and Lordship. Thus, His Words, *Who made the earth for you an expanse,* is an indication of Man's placement on earth to perpetuate life. That is part of His guidance. His Words, *and made for you therein paths* allude to Man's paths which he takes on the earth in order to satisfy his needs. That is also part of His guidance. His Words, *and sent down water from the cloud; then thereby* (bihi) *We have brought forth many species* (azāwjan) *of various herbs. Eat and pasture your cattle*, allude to guiding Man and cattle to eat plants and herbs to perpetuate life. It involves guiding the sky to rain, the rainwater to fall and the plants to grow. The letter *bāʾ* in *bihi* (thereby) is causative. It confirms the relationship of cause and effect between things in the universe. The plants' being *azwājan* means their being similar kinds and species, as interpreted by some exegetes. Alternatively it could refer to the pairing of males and females in plants, which is a reality that this Mighty Book has informed about.

His Words, *then thereby We have brought forth many species of various herbs,* contain a grammatical shift for rhetorical purposes (*iltifāt*), from

the third person to the first person plural. It is related that the reason for this, is due to the extraordinariness in this amazing creation, which is the originator of various forms and species of existence, providing a variety of life therein and all emanating from one source, water. Astounding creation can only bring forth other wonderful existents. Here, fascinating beings and others —namely, their helpers—are being spoken about. For rhetorical purposes the grammatical shift is used in regards to yielding plants with water, in various places in the Qur'an, example: *Do you not see that God sends down water from the cloud, then We bring forth therewith fruits of various colors* (35:27) … *and sent down for you water from the cloud; then We cause to grow thereby beautiful Gardens* (27:60). *And He it is Who sends down water from the cloud, then We bring forth with it buds of all (plants)* (6:99).

… most surely there are signs in this for those endowed with understanding: [The word] *nuhā* is the plural of *nuhyah* which means mind. It is so-called because it forbids (*li nahyihi ʿan*) following caprice.

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٥٥﴾

(20:55) ***From it We created you and into it We shall send you back and from it will We raise you a second time.***

The pronoun [it] refers to the earth. The verse describes the origin of Man's creation from the earth followed by his return to it and becoming part of it followed by his being brought forth from it, to return to God. There is in [the verse] a complete course of guidance for Mankind.

وَلَقَدْ أَرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَىٰ ﴿٥٦﴾

(20:56) ***And truly We showed him Our signs, all of them, but he rejected and refused.***

It is likely that "Our signs" mean the staff, the hand and all the other signs which Moses showed Pharaoh during the days of his propagation before he drowned as previously referred to in, *Go you and your brother with My signs*. Thus it means all the signs which he [Pharaoh] was shown even if they were not brought all together at the beginning of the propagation. Similarly, *but he rejected and refused* means all his rejection and refusal and not when the propagation began.

قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٥٧﴾

(20:57) ***Said he: Have you come to us that you should turn us out of our land by your magic, O Moses?***

The pronoun [he] refers to Pharaoh. He accused Moses:

(i) of sorcery so that he would not be forced to concede the truthfulness of the miraculous signs he brought and the truth of his invitation, and

(ii) of wanting to turn the Egyptians out of their land—Egypt.

It was a political accusation by which he wanted to distract people and stir their minds against him by [saying] that he was an enemy who wanted to cast them out of their homes and motherland through his trickery. There is no life for someone who does not have a home.

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾

(20:58) ***So we too will produce before you magic like it, therefore make between us and you an appointment, which we should not break, (neither) we nor you, (in) a central place.***

It is likely, as evidenced by the subsequent verse that *mawʿid* is a noun denoting time. *Ikhlāf al-waʿd* means not acting in accordance with it [the appointment]. *Makān suwā* means, (i) in the middle of the expanse or, (ii) level with the edges without any elevation or inclination.

Al-Mufradāt says: *Makān suwā* or *siwaʾ* means center. One says either *siwāʾ* or *suwā*. *Suwā* or *siwā* means its edges are level [with it]. It can be used as an adjective or space/time qualifier (*ẓarf*). It is originally an infinitive.

It means: "So swear, that we may bring you (our) magic to match yours (in order) to refute your proof and defeat your will. So set (up) an appointed time between us and you, which we should not break, in a place between us or in a place the edges of which are level with [it], or, make a place like that between us and you".

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّينَةِ وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

(20:59) ***He said: Your appointment is the day of the Festival and let the people be gathered together in the early forenoon.***

The pronoun [he] refers to Moses. The appointment was made for the day of festival (*zīnah*). It is apparent from the context that it was a day of feast for them. The wording of the verse also shows that they would dress up (*yatazayyanūn*) and decorate the markets. According to al-Rāghib, *ḥashr al-nās* means getting people out of their dwellings and rousing them to war and similar such [pursuits]. The *ḍuhā* means the time of day when the sun spreads.

His Words, and let the people be gathered together in the early forenoon is joined with a conjunction to festival (*zīnah*) or day (*yawm*), where the word *yawm* or *waqt* (time) or the like is also implied here. It means, Moses said: "Your appointment is on the day of finery—the day people are gathered in the early forenoon". It would not be surprising if it were an object along with it, meaning: "Your appointment is the day of the festival along with the gathering of the people in the early forenoon". This boils down to conditionality. It was only made conditional so that what he and they would do would be before people's eyes, at a time of high visibility.

فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَىٰ ﴿٦٠﴾

(20:60) ***So Pharaoh turned his back and settled his plan, then came.***

It is apparent from the context that Pharaoh's turning his back means his leaving the gathering [convened] to set the appointment and to prepare for what he had promised. The "settling of his plans" means putting together his schemes—the magicians along with everything else he used to blind and confuse people. *Jam kaydihi* could also mean gathering those included in his plan [*dhawī kaydihi*: literally the owners of his plan]. That which is annexed is omitted. It means the magicians and all his other workers and helpers. *Thumma ʿaṭā* means: Then he came to and attended the appointment.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَىٰ ﴿٦١﴾

(20:61) ***Moses said to them: Woe to you! Do not forge a lie against God, lest He destroy you by a punishment, and he who forges (a lie) indeed fails to attain (his desire).***

The word *wayl* is a word of punishment and threat. Its etymology is a sense of punishment. *Waylakum* means: May God punish you [severely]. *Saḥt* means extirpating hair by shaving, plucking, uprooting and destroying.

His Words, Moses said to them: Woe to you! Do not forge a lie against God: The third and second person plural pronouns refer to Pharaoh and his *kayd* that is the magicians and all his other helpers against Moses. They were referred to in the previous verse. As for [*kayd*] referring to the magicians alone, they were not mentioned or indicated by any of the wording.

This is what Moses said by way of an admonition and warning to them about forging a lie against God. Part of their lie—referred to above—was Pharaoh's calling the divine communications magic and accusing the true propagation of being a means to turn them out of their land. Also part of the lie was the magic. However *iftirāʾ al-kadhib ʿalā Allah* (forging a lie against God)—only means attributing something to God which is not from Him. Deeming the miraculous sign to be magic and the true propagation to be a political plot means not attributing them to God. Likewise, is the case of coming up with magic against miracle despite acknowledging that it is magic and not real. None of these counts as forging a lie against God. It is likely that forging a lie against God means believing in the fundamentals of idolatry such as the divinity and intercession of the gods and the regulation of the world's being attributable to them—as the exegetes have explained the verse. In several places in the Qur'an that is called forging a lie against God, example: *Indeed we shall have forged a lie against God If we go back to your religion* (7:89).

The clause, *lest He destroy you by a punishment* follows on consequentially from the interdiction, that is: "Do not attribute partners to God such that He exterminates you and destroys you with a punishment because of your polytheism". The use of *ʿadhāb* in the indefinite indicates its severity and mightiness.

Regarding His Words, *and he who forges (a lie) indeed fails to attain (his desire)*, the word *khaybah* means despair of achieving the aspired result. This statement is made as a universal principle to be adhered to, and it is indeed as such. An *iftirāʾ* is a type of lying and it is caused by false factors. False causes do not lead to true causes or true consequences so their results are unsuitable for eternity and do not lead to happiness. Nothing but misfortune and loss are the consequence of them. Thus the

meaning of the verse is more comprehensive than (the verse): *Say: Those who forge a lie against God shall not be successful* (10:69), because it confirms disappointment with regard to all *iftirāʾ* as opposed to the second verse. There was a discussion about lying (*kadhib*) not succeeding with regard to the end of (the verse): *And they brought his shirt with false blood* (damin kadhib) *upon it* (12:18) in the (Ar. vol. 11) of this book.

فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَىٰ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوا إِنْ هَٰذَانِ لَسَاحِرَانِ
يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ
الْمُثْلَىٰ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ
اسْتَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٤﴾

(20:62-64) ***So they disputed with one another about their affair and kept the discourse secret. They said: These are most surely two magicians who wish to turn you out from your land by their magic and to take away your best traditions. Therefore settle your plan, then come standing in ranks and he will prosper indeed this day who overcomes.***

The meaning of *tanāzuʾ* is very similar to *ikhtilāf* (disagreement). [It] is derived from *nazʾ* which means pulling something out of its place to extirpate [it] from it. *Tanāzuʾ* can be transitive as in the verse or it can be made transitive with *fi* as in, *then if you quarrel about* (tanazaʾtum fī) *anything*. *Najwā* means secret discourse. Etymologically it is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) meaning *munajāt* that is talking secretly. *Muthlā* is the feminine of *amthal* (most ideal) as *fuḍlā* is of *afḍal* (best). It means the closest and most likely. *Al-Tarīqā al-muthlā* means the tradition (*sunnah*) which is closest to the truth or to their hope that is the tradition (*sunnah*) of idolatry by which Egypt was administered at that time that is the worship of [many] gods at the forefront of whom was Pharaoh the god of the Egyptians. *Ijmaʾ*—according to Al-Rāghib—means gathering something together on the basis of thought and reflection. *Ṣaff* means arranging things in a straight line like people, trees and so on. It is used as a gerund (*maṣdar*) or verbal noun (*ism maṣdar*).[1] It is possible that *ṣaffan* is a gerund

1 A verbal noun (*ism maṣdar*) is a noun that has the meaning of a *maṣdar*

in His Words, *then come standing in ranks* and that it means *ṣāffīn* that is, come to it unified and agreed without disagreeing, splitting into groups and becoming weak and be united in the plot against him. It is clear from, *So they disputed with one another* being made consequential to what the previous verse says, *Moses said …* that the dispute and disagreement only appeared among them as a result of the warning given to them by Moses. It had some effect on them. It is in its nature to do so because it is naught but a word of truth with nothing ambiguous about it. In summary it can be said: "You have no knowledge of what you claim—the divinity of the gods and their intercession. Your attributing partners and intercessors to God is a lie forged against Him. He who forges a lie indeed fails to attain [his desire]". This is a clear proof—not veiled or covered in dust.

It can be deduced from His subsequent words where the magicians say, *Surely we believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and the magic to which you compelled us* that the disagreement initially broke out among the magicians themselves. His subsequent words, *then come standing in ranks* gives the impression that those of them who were hesitant or determined not to confront Moses at all were some of the magicians, if the discourse is addressed to them. The context may support that.

Whatever the case may be, when Pharaoh and his aides saw the people's dispute, a matter that could bring about disgrace and failure for them, they kept the discourse secret and did not speak to [people] about what wisdom and warnings that Moses had spoken to them. On the contrary, they turned away from that to what Pharaoh had accused him of—magic and drawing up a political plot to turn the Egyptian nation out of their land. The nation would not be pleased with that; it involves their leaving their homes and properties and falling from the pinnacle of their happiness to the lowest point of misery, enduring the same suffering as the Israelites had among them. They added to that another matter, the issue of evacuating and leaving their dwellings and property [which would mean] the end of their best traditions—their national tradition—which was the religion of idolatry that had ruled them for many centuries and

(infinitive, gerund). The difference is that a *maṣdar* is primary and then the verb conjugates and the *ism maṣdar* are derived from it. For example, "to remove" is an infinitive, and "removal" is a verbal noun. In English, gerunds (like "removing") can match both *maṣdar* and *ism maṣdar* in Arabic. (Trans.)

generations. Their bones had become firm and their flesh had grown on the basis of it. The public consider national traditions to be sacred especially those which they are accustomed to and which they have conceded are clear, Heavenly traditions. This is in reality a temptation for them to remain firm and steadfast within the idolatrous faith, but doubtless, not because it is the religion of truth—because Moses' argument had made clear its invalidity and uncovered its futility—but rather because it was a sacred national tradition upon which their sectarian identity (*milliyyah*) depended and relied. Their might and greatness was based on it and their life depended on it. If they disagreed and failed to confront Moses, who (eventually) overcame them, that would mean their end once and for all. The consensus was to gather all their artifice, set aside their differences, and come standing in ranks to overcome [him], because *he will prosper indeed this day who overcomes*. They kept enticing them into uniting, agreeing and not weakening with regard to protecting their nation and civilization, and launching unitedly against their enemy. Pharaoh coupled that with sweet promises to them as seen elsewhere where He says: … *they said to Pharaoh: Shall we get a reward if we are the vanquishers? He said: Yes, and surely you will then be of those who are made near* (26:41-42).

Overall, they used every incentive and disincentive to make them remain steadfast and confront Moses in order to overcome him. This is what can be understood by reflecting upon the meaning of the verses given the context, the text of these verses and the text of verses elsewhere. Thus, *So they disputed with one another about their affair* is an allusion to their disagreement following Moses' admonition and the proof he pointed out. *And kept the discourse secret* refers to their secret discussion about Moses and their attempt to remove the disagreement which stemmed from listening to Moses' warning.

They said: These are most surely two magicians…: This is an explanation of the secret discourse amongst themselves. Its meaning was explained above. *Ina hādhāni la sāḥirān* (these are most surely two magicians) is the canonical reading, *in* with a *kasrah* under the *hamzah* and a *sūkun* above the *nūn*. It is really *inna* (truly, indeed, surely), where the stress (*shadda*) has been dropped. That is why it no longer has the effect of making the noun *manṣūb* (accusative) and the predicate *marfūᶜ* (nominative).[1]

1 That is, the verse is really saying: *inna hādhayni la-sāḥirāni*. However, since

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَىٰ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا ۖ فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ ﴿٦٦﴾

(20:65-66) ***They said: O Moses! will you cast, or shall we be the first who cast down? He said: Nay! cast down. then lo! their cords* (ḥibāluhum)** ***and their rods* (ʿiṣiyyuhum)*—it appeared to him on account of their magic as if they were running.***

The word *ḥibāl* is the plural of *ḥabl* (rope) and *ʿiṣiyy* is the plural of *ʿaṣā* (cane, staff). The magicians used them to create the illusion of serpents and snakes in people's eyes like that which appeared from Moses' staff. There is brevity and succinctness as if to say: "So they came to the appointment and Moses attended it. There came the question: What did they do? There came the reply: They said: O Moses! will you cast your staff or shall we be the first who cast down?"

This was the choice they gave Moses between his being the first to cast or to wait until they had cast, then bring [about] what he would.

[Moses] said: *Nay! cast down*. He gave way to them to bring what they might while he relied on his Lord, confident in His promise, without worry or agitation. One of the things his Lord had told him was: *I do hear and see.* When the verse says, *then lo! their cords and their rods—it appeared to him on account of their magic as if they were running,* it implies "So they cast then lo! their cords and their rods … ", where the implied part is omitted to add to the surprise as if, when he said to them, *Nay! Cast down*, he immediately witnessed what he did without their casting their cords and rods in the interim. What appeared to Moses appeared to other people watching, as referred to elsewhere: *… they deceived the people's eyes and frightened them* (7:116).

The difference here is that He says that Moses is among them. It is as if it is a prelude to what is in the subsequent verse.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَىٰ ﴿٦٧﴾

(20:67) ***So Moses conceived a fear within his soul.***

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the particle *inna* has been shortened to in, it no longer makes the subject *manṣūb* and that is why it says *hādhān* instead of *hādhayn*. (Trans.)

Al-Rāghib says in his *Mufradāt: Wajs* means a secret voice. *Tawajjus* means listening secretly. *Ijās* means the presence of that in one's soul. *Fa awjasa minhum khīfah* means "he conceived a fear of them". Hence *wajs* is a state of mind (*nafs*) which occurs after the notion because the notion is the beginning of the idea then the conception is what comes [to mind].

Thus, *ijās al-khīfah fī al-nafs* means feeling it in the soul. It is only light, its effect not appearing on the surface of the skin. Its presence in the soul is followed by the appearance of a bad feeling (*khāṭir sū'*) in [the soul] without yielding to what that would necessitate—being wary and on one's guard. Otherwise, it would definitely show on the surface of the skin and in a person's actions. That is what the use of the indefinite for *khīfah* (that is a "fear") indicates, as if to say: He felt in his soul a kind of fear, one not to be paid any attention to. It is amazing what one of them says—that the use of the indefinite was for emphasis and the fear was great. It is a mistake. If this is how it was, its effect would have shown on the surface of his skin and there would have been no reason to qualify the fear as being within his soul.

Therefore, it is apparent that the fear which he conceived in his soul was a momentary feeling. The same is true about the thought that crossed his mind afterwards. The mightiness of their magic touched his heart, and he felt that their magic can appear to be equal or close to his sign [that is, miracle]. Thus he conceived a fear due to this thought; a fear which, like the thought itself, had no external effect.

Claim: He feared that people would be confused and they would not distinguish between his sign and their magic because of the similarity between them. They would not believe or follow him. He did not yet know that his staff would devour the lies they had told.

Reply: That contradicts God's assurance and his trust in His commandment. His Lord had told him before that: *…(go) with Our signs; you two and those who follow you shall be uppermost* (28:35).

Claim: He feared that people would disperse after seeing their magic and not not wait for him to cast his staff, a draw would be declared and the effort would go to waste.

Reply: It contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse. It is likely that the clause, *So Moses conceived a fear in his soul …* follows on consequentially from the clause, *then lo! their cords and their rods—it appeared to him…* which means that he feared what appeared to him of their magic,

not that he feared the people dispersing before the matter became clear through his casting his staff. If he had feared that, he would not have allowed them to cast their cords and rods first. Furthermore, this explanation is incompatible with what He says to strengthen his soul: *We said: Fear not, surely you shall be the uppermost* (20:68). Instead [he would have been] told: "Fear not, We will not let them disperse until you cast the staff".

Whatever the case may be, it is clear from his conceiving a fear in his soul that they made their magic appear to the people similar or close to his miraculous sign appearing to the people, even though what they brought about was illusionism and not real whereas what he brought about was a miraculous sign which was real. God regards their enchantment to be mighty because He says: *He said: Cast. So when they cast, they deceived the people's eyes and frightened them, and they produced a mighty enchantment* (7:116).

That is why, at this juncture, God supports him with what can leave the spectator in no doubt at all: the staff's devouring everything they have conjured.

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا ۖ
إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدُ سَاحِرٍ ۖ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَىٰ ﴿٦٩﴾

(20:68-69) ***We said: Fear not, surely you shall be the uppermost. And cast down what is in your right hand; it shall devour what they have wrought; they have wrought only the plan of a magician, and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from.***

It is a negative imperative with the purpose of strengthening and supporting [him]. It is explained by the clause, *surely you shall be the uppermost*. It means you shall surpass them in every respect. If that is how it is, none of their scheming or magic will do you any harm so there is no need to fear.

His Words, *And cast down what is in your right hand; it shall devour what they have wrought …* is a commandment to cast down the staff for it to become a serpent and devour what they had wrought with magic. Referring to the staff as, *what is in your right hand* is one of the subtlest and most profound expressions because there is therein an allusion to the fact that a thing has no reality apart from what God wills. If He wants

what is in his right hand to be a staff, it will be a staff but if He wants it to be a serpent it will be a serpent. Thus it has nothing of itself. The verse refers to their serpents and snakes as "what they have wrought". This is to show that in this contest on one side there is that absolute power that the names and realities of all things are subject to it, and on the other side there is human fashioning which goes no further than being a futile scheme: … *the word of God, that is the highest* (9:40); … *and God is the master of His affair* (12:21).

There is in this sentence—*And cast down what is in your right hand; it shall devour what they have wrought*—an explanation that senses perceive him to be uppermost just as the end of it explains his truly being uppermost because there is no truth to falsehood. Whoever is in the right should not fear falsehood over his [own] truth.

His Words, *they have wrought only the plan of a magician, and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from*, is an explanation on the basis of the wording for, *it shall devour what* (mā) *they have wrought*. [The word] *mā* (what) has a verbal noun equivalence or it is a relative pronoun and it does in fact explain his being uppermost because what they had [wrought] was a magician's artifice without any reality to it whereas what he had was a miraculous sign which was real. The truth is uppermost and nothing rises above it. His Words, *and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from*, is like the universal rule governing the clause, *they have wrought only the plan of a magician*, because what a magician achieves with his magic is the spectators' fantasy. There is no truth to it and no success. No true happiness is attained in an imaginary thing which has no reality to it.

The clause, *and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from,* are similar to: *Surely God does not guide the unjust people* (6:144); *and God does not guide the transgressing people* (5:108) and other verses.

All are branches of: … *surely falsehood is a vanishing (thing)* (17:81); *and God will blot out the falsehood and confirm the truth with His Words* (42:24).

Falsehood still adorns matters and makes them look like the truth. The truth still blots it out and quickly or slowly devours what it has made appear to the fancy of the spectators. Thus, the parable of Moses' staff vs. the sorcery of the magicians applies to every falsehood that appears and

the truth that devours it and makes it disappear. There was a discussion, which is of benefit to the current one, regarding the exegesis of: *He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according to their measure* (13:17).

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَىٰ ﴿٧٠﴾

(20:70) *And the magicians were cast down making obeisance; they said: We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.*

There is an implication and brevity in these words; that which is implied is: "So he cast down what was in his right hand and it devoured what they had wrought. Thereafter, the magicians were cast down". The use of the passive—*And the magicians were cast down*—instead of saying: "And the magicians prostrated", is an indication of their humiliation by the divine power and their defeat by the truth prevailing, such that they found no recourse but to throw themselves on the ground and prostrate—as if they had no will [of their own] with regard to that and they had just been thrown down by someone else, unknown to them.

Their words, *We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses*, are a testimony of faith by them. They described Him as the Lord of Moses and Aaron as a way of testifying to His Lordship as well as the Messengership of Moses and Aaron. The separation (of the clause, *they said*) without a conjunction as opposed to a conjunction preceding *they said*, is because it is like the answer to an implied question: Then what did they say? They said, *We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.*

قَالَ آمَنتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۖ فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿٧١﴾

(20:71) *[Pharaoh] said: You believe in him before I give you leave; most surely he is the chief of you who taught you enchantment, therefore I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will certainly crucify you on the trunks of the palm trees, and certainly you will come to know which of us is the more severe and the more abiding in chastising.*

Kabīr means chief. Cutting off hands and feet on opposite sides means cutting off the right hand and the left foot and crucifying. The use of the second form *taṣlīb* to indicate severity and abundance is like the use of the second form in *taqtīʿ* to indicate severity and abundance. *Judhūʿ* is the plural of *jidhaʿ* which is the trunk of a palm tree. His Words, *You believe in him before I give you leave* are a threat Pharaoh made to the magicians because they believed (in Moses). The sentence is [either]:

(i) interrogative, the [interrogative] particle left implied, interrogative to [express] disapproval (*inkār*) or

(ii) declarative (*khabariyyah*) meant to describe their offence.

The clause, *most surely he is the chief of you who taught you enchantment* is an accusation against them of a political plot against the Egyptian people in Egypt as if they had plotted with their chief for Moses to claim to be a Prophet, call the people of Egypt to God, and, as part of that, to perform magic. This way they [Pharaoh and his clan] would seek the help of the magicians, who would come and gather to defeat him. However, they would then betray and desert Pharaoh and believe in Moses instead. Thus, the masses would follow them, their ideal way would slip away from them, and whoever among them did not believe would be expelled. He says elsewhere: *Surely this is a plot which you have secretly devised in this city, that you may turn out of it its people* (7:123).

He [Pharaoh] only accused them of this to incite the masses against them just as he had accused Moses of something similar at the outset. His Words, *therefore I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides*, are a promise and threat to them of severe punishment. He does not mention in the Qur'an (*kalāmihi*) whether he did so or not.

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْثِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا ۖ فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ ۖ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَٰذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾

(20:72) *They said: We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us, therefore decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide about this world's life.*

These words are eloquent in their utterance, profound in their import, far-reaching in their meaning and elevated in their status. Knowledge and wisdom burst and gush forth from them. A while ago, Pharaoh's awe-inspiring appearance and splendor had filled their hearts. [People] were

humbled by the adornments and embellishments of the world which he had—which were nothing but the false imaginations and vain illusions. They would call him the highest lord and (would) say when they cast their cords and rods: "By the might of Pharaoh, verily we will be those who overcome". No sooner did the signs of truth appear to them, their eyes were dazzled. Thereat, the might and power they had believed that Pharaoh had, fell, as did the value and status of embellishment and adornment he had in this world. Their hearts were overcome and the vices of cowardice, adulation, following desire and infatuation with the mirage of the embellishment of life in this world were taken away and replaced by attachment to the truth, entering under God's authority and feeling empowered by His Might. They only wanted what God desired and only wished for what God wished. They feared none other than God, Mighty is His Name.

All that is clear from reflecting on the conversation which took place between Pharaoh and them; if a comparison is made between the two statements [that is Pharaoh's words and the magicians' reply], Pharaoh is (seen as) inadvertent to his Lord's status. He sees nothing but himself. He adds to that, that he is the lord of the Egyptians, he rules the kingdom of Egypt and has armies mobilized. He has full authority over whatever he wants and decides. However, in terms of the fact of the matter, these are nothing but empty claims. His ignorance deluded him into thinking that the truth follows his falsehood and reality is subject and obedient to his claim. Thus, he expects that people's souls—even though in their disposition they have understanding and judgement—will only ever feel anything through their feelings and disposition by his leave. Their hearts will only ever submit and be certain of a truth with his permission. That is what His Words to the magicians [mean], *You believe in him before I give you leave*. He [Pharaoh] believes that humans have no reality beyond this bodily construct which lives, then rots and ceases to exist and that he has no happiness apart from attaining these ephemeral, material pleasures. That is what (the Words), *therefore I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will certainly crucify you on the trunks of the palm trees, and certainly you will come to know which of us is the more severe and the more abiding in chastising*, mean. One should ponder over the end of his statement.

On the other hand there are these believers whom the Truth [that is

God] has overtaken and encompassed. He has purified them and chosen them for Himself. As a result, they see the worldly pleasures of possession and position that Pharaoh counts to be real as nothing but an imagined mirage and a deceitful glamor that is void. They see that being given a choice between these adornments and what they have believed in is [just like] being given a choice between falsehood and truth, or mirage and reality. But the people of certitude would never doubt their certainty and choose falsehood over truth or mirage over reality, because they are direct witnesses to that. That is why they said, "We do not prefer you"—that is, we would never choose you over—"to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us". What they meant here was not preferring a person as a human body with a soul, but preferring a person who claimed to possess the entire world with all its wealth and pleasures.

What Pharaoh threatened them with—horrific killing, severe punishment and eradicating life in this world, believing Man to have nothing beyond life therein, his happiness or misery all in [that life]—they believed the opposite to be true: That Man has an eternal, everlasting life, compared to this immediate and ephemeral life which has no value. If he has a happy eternal life then having a miserable life in this world will not be of any harm to him, and if he has a miserable eternal life then nothing will be of any avail to him.

Thus, they did not fear losing their life in this transient world if they were to profit in the eternal afterlife. That is the meaning of their reply to Pharaoh—a response to his threat to kill them, *therefore decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide about this world's life*. Then the subsequent verses which quote the end of their reply to Pharaoh are an explanation and clarification of their words, *We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us*. There is in their words, *what has come to us of clear arguments* an allusion to the fact that they deemed what they witnessed—in terms of what happened to the staff—to be several signs for example its turning into a serpent, its devouring the cords and rods and its turning back into its original state. [Alternatively] it is possible that the particle *min* ["of" in "of clear arguments"] is partitive meaning they witnessed a single sign and believed that God had many other signs. [However] this is unlikely.

إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ

خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿٧٣﴾

(20:73) ***Surely we believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and the magic to which you compelled us; and God is better and more abiding.***

[The word] *khaṭāyā* is the plural of *khaṭīʾah* which is similar in meaning to *al-sayyiʾah* (sin). *To which you compelled us* is joined with a conjunction to, *our sins*. *Min al-siḥr* [lit., of the magic] is explanatory [of the magic]. It means: "That He may forgive us for the magic to which you compelled us". Therein is an indication that they were forced to do it either when they were assembled before Pharaoh from their homes or when they disputed over their affair among themselves and kept the dialogue secret and were forced to confront and duel. The beginning of the verse is an explanation of what they said, *We do not prefer you …* that is We choose only God—Who created us—over you and believe in Him that He might forgive us our sins and the magic to which you compelled us. The end of the verse, *and God is better and more abiding* completes the explanation. It is like an elucidation for the beginning of [the verse] as if to say: "We only choose His forgiveness over your kindness because it is better and more enduring, that is, better than everything which is good and more abiding than everything which is lasting" because of the lack of any qualification (*iṭlāq*). Thus nothing is preferred to Him. The ending of the verse serves as a contrast to the end of Pharaoh's statement, *and certainly you will come to know which of us is the more severe and the more abiding in chastising*. They refer to Him firstly as, *He Who made us*, secondly as, *our Lord* and thirdly as, *God*. The first is because, He created us, that is, He brought us out of the cover of non-existence into existence. It follows from that, that every goodness is attributable to Him. No one else when compared to Him has anything but the illusion of vanity, the source of every favoring—the context being one of favoring—of Him over Pharaoh. The second is because it talks about belief in Him. His attribute which touches mostly on belief and servitude is that of His being Lord which includes a sense of Ownership and regulation. The third is because the reason for a thing's goodness is its perfection. He has all the Attributes of Perfection which dictate His being absolutely good. Thus it was appropriate to refer to Him by His knowledge which is indicative of the Essence which has all the Attributes of Perfection. Thus the words about the three stations in

spite of their apparent simplicity comprise a proof for their claim. They are essentially saying: "We will not prefer you over Him Who has created us because He is our Creator. Verily we believe in our Lord because He is our Lord. God is best because He is God, Mighty is His Name".

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ ﴿٧٤﴾

(20:74) ***Whoever comes to his Lord (being) guilty, for him is surely hell; he shall not die therein, nor shall he live.***

This is a justification for their claim that they have believed in God so that He may forgive their sins. That is, *Surely we believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins*, because one whose sins are not forgiven is guilty, and *whoever comes to his Lord (being) guilty for him is surely hell…*

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَىٰ ﴿٧٥﴾ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ ﴿٧٦﴾

(20:75-76) ***And whoever comes to Him a believer (and) he has done good deeds indeed, those it is who shall have the high ranks. The Gardens of perpetuity, beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein; and this is the reward of him who has purified himself.***

According to what Al-Rāghib says, a *darajah* is a level but it has to go up for example the rungs (*darajāt*) of a ladder. The opposite of it is a *darakah* which is a level going down. That is why one says *darajāt* (levels) of Heaven but *darakāt* (levels) of hell. *Al-tazākki* means growing properly. It means a person living with true belief and pious deeds.

The two verses describe what belief and good deeds inevitably lead to just as the previous verse describes what sin resulting from disbelief or disobedience inevitably leads to. The three verses describing the consequence of sin and belief are with reference to Pharaoh's threat and promise to them. Pharaoh had threatened them that he would cut off their limbs and crucify them for believing in Moses and claimed that he was most severe and most abiding in punishment. They countered him by saying that the sinner will have hell according to his Lord wherein he will not die or live, not dying to save himself from the cruelty of the pain of its punishment.

The worst punishment in the world is death in which there is an escape for a criminal (who has been) punished.[1] He does not live in [Hellfire] because there is nothing there which makes his life pleasant. No good is hoped for him therein except to suffer the punishment awaiting him.

Before that, he [Pharaoh] promised them status by making some of his favorites. The reward is as God quotes: *[they] said: We must surely have a reward if we are the prevailing ones. He said: Yes, and you shall certainly be of those who are near (to me)* (7:113-114).

They countered that by saying that whoever comes to Him as a believer and has done good deeds will have the highest ranks. The use of the remote demonstrative pronoun "those" (*fa ulāʾika*) is an aggrandizement of their status. "These it is who shall have the high ranks": This counters Pharaoh's promise that he will make them among those who are near to him.

The Gardens of perpetuity, beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein; and this is the reward of him who has purified himself: In other words, this is the reward of him who purifies himself by faith and good deeds. This counters Pharaoh's promise of reward.

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَافُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَىٰ ﴿٧٩﴾

(20:77-79) ***And certainly We revealed to Moses, saying: Travel by night*** **(asri)** ***with My servants, then make*** **(fa-ḍrib)** ***for them a dry*** **(yabasan)** ***path*** **(ṭarīqan)** ***in the sea, not fearing to be overtaken*** **(darakan)**, ***nor being afraid. And Pharaoh followed them with his armies, so there came upon them of the sea that which came upon them. And Pharaoh led astray his people and he did not guide (them) aright.***

[The word] *isrāʾ* means travelling at night. "My servants" means the Israelites.

… then make for them a dry path in the sea: It is claimed that: *ḍarb*

1 I think the author is making a comparison here between the condition in hell where the sinner shall neither live nor die and the death in this world where there is an escape of punishment for the sinner, though temporary. (Ed.)

means striking with the staff as indicated by His Words elsewhere. *Ṭarīqan* (path) is the object of *iḍrib* by way of extended [meaning]. It is a rational metaphor. It means: Strike the sea so that there will be a path for them.

Ḍarb could mean building and erecting like *ḍuribat al-khaymah* (the tent was put up) or *ḍuribat al-qāʿidah* (the base was set up). According to al-Rāghib, *yabas* means a place that had water in it which subsequently disappeared. *Darak* is the consequence of something.

So there came upon them of the sea that which came upon them: Using the same term—"came upon them"—as both the verb and the complement of the sentence in an indefinite form is a very expressive way of depicting the horror of the situation.

It is claimed that the clause, *And Pharaoh led astray his people and he did not guide (them) aright* refutes what Pharaoh told his people when he addressed them: *… and I do not make you follow any but the right way* (40:29).

Thus the clause, *and he did not guide* is not an emphasis and repetition of, *And Pharaoh led astray his people.*

Examining Narrations

(1) According to *Nahj al-Balāghah*, ʿAlī said: Moses did not entertain fear for his own self. Rather he apprehended mastery of the ignorant and deviation [having its] turn. It means what was said above by way of exegesis of the verse.

(2) God's Messenger said:[1] If you catch a magician, kill him. He then recited, *and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from.* He said: And he is not safe wherever he may be found.

Author's comment: It is difficult to see how the explanation given in the hadith applies to the verse with its context.

almizan.org

1 *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* cited by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of Jundub ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Bajālī:

Verses 80-98

This is the last part of Moses' story which is set out in the chapter; He recounts a number of his blessings upon the Israelites, for example, delivering them from their enemy, making a covenant with them on the blessed side of the mountain and sending down manna and quails upon them. It concludes by narrating the story of the Samaritan and his leading the people astray by worshiping the calf. The story is linked to Moses' tryst with God on Mount Ṭūr.

The primary objective of this section of the story is to explain how the Israelites qualified for God's wrath. That is why this matter is explained in detail here while other things are only alluded to briefly.

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الأَيْمَنَ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى ﴿٨٠﴾

(20:80) ***O children of Israel! indeed We delivered you from your enemy, and We made a covenant with you on the blessed side of the mountain, and We sent to you the manna and the quails.***

[The verse] is as if to imply: "We said, O children of Israel! indeed We delivered you from your enemy, that is from Pharaoh, whom God's drowned, and He delivered the Israelites from him after their prolonged hardship".

…and We made a covenant with you on the blessed side of the mountain: [The word] *al-ayman* (the blessed) is in the accusative because it is an adjective describing *jānib* (side). This covenant may mean Moses' covenant of forty nights for the revelation of the Torah. The story was mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah (The Cow) and elsewhere, as well as the story of the manna and the quails.

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى ﴿٨١﴾

(20:81) ***Eat of the good things We have given you for sustenance,***

and be not inordinate with respect to them, lest My wrath should be due to you, and to whomsoever My wrath is due shall perish indeed.

This is permissibility in the form of a command. The annexation of *ṭayyibāt* (the good things) to *mā razaqnākum* (We have given you for sustenance) is an example of annexing the adjective to what it describes because it would make no sense in His attributing the sustenance to Himself and then dividing it into good and not [good], as is supported by what He says elsewhere: … *and We gave them of the goodly things* (45:16).

… and be not inordinate with respect to them, lest My wrath should be due to you: The pronoun [them] refers to the food which is referred to as *al-ṭayyibāt* [the good things]. That [would] be through ingratitude for the blessing and not giving thanks for it. As they said: *O Moses! we cannot bear with one food, therefore pray to your Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions* (2:61).

Lest My wrath should be due to you, means My wrath is due and necessary [just like] when debt is due under the heading of "It is paid (*ḍuriba*) when it is due (*idhā wujiba adāʾuh*)". Wrath is one of His active Attributes. An application of His wrath is His will that some unpleasantness should befall a servant, whereby He prepares the causes of that due to an act of disobedience which he has committed.

And to whomsoever my wrath is due shall perish indeed **(fa qad hawā):** *Hawā* means fall. [It comes] from *hawi* meaning falling. It is explained as perishing (in exegesis).

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحاً ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى ﴿٨٢﴾

(20:82) ***And most surely I am most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction.***

It is a promise of confirmed mercy following the severe threat. That is why He describes Himself as Oft-Forgiving and says, *And most surely I am most Forgiving* and does not say: "And I am Forgiving", or, "I will forgive". *Tawbah* means to return. Just as it can be from disobedience to obedience, so too can it be from polytheism to monotheism. Just as belief can be in God, so, too can it be in God's signs from His Prophets and

Messengers and every law they have brought from God. Belief is used frequently in the Qurʾan in both senses [of the word] just as *tawbah* is used in both stated senses.

Just as the Israelites engaged in acts of disobedience, through which they committed sin, so too did they engage in polytheism for example worshiping the calf. Thus there is no need to construe the words other than as per the literal unqualified meaning—returning from both polytheism and disobedience to belief in God and His signs. The same applies to its unrestrictedly applying to all penitents—the Israelites and others—even though the Israelites are addressed, because Divine Attributes such as forgiveness are not particular to one people to the exclusion of others. The verse means—though God knows best—"And surely I am Oft-Forgiving to every person who returns and believes either from polytheism or disobedience and either believes in Me, My signs from My Messengers or My laws which they bring, by regretting what he has done and doing good deeds, by exchanging disobedience and rebellion with regards to what he sinned in, for obedience therein". This realizes the fundamental meaning of return from something. It was discussed in detail in the exegesis of His Words, *Repentance with God is only for …* in part four of this book [Eng. vol. 8].

Then continues to follow the right direction: *Ihtidāʾ* is the opposite of error (*ḍalāl*) as attested to by His Words: *Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray* (17:16); *… he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way* (5:105).

Does it mean:

(i) his not going astray with regard to exactly what he repented from, by going back to the sin meaning that repentance from sin is only of benefit in relation to what he gave up before repenting and does not suffice him if he goes back to it again, or

(ii) his not going astray in anything else meaning that the forgiveness will only benefit him in relation to the sin from which he has repented? In other words it will only benefit him completely if he does not go astray in other deeds. Alternatively, does it mean both?

It is apparent from the use of *thumma* (then) as a conjunction that it means the first [alternative] meaning constancy and remaining repentant, so it comes back to the condition of making amends which is referred to in several verses, as in: *Except those who repent after that and amend, then*

surely God is Forgiving, Merciful (3:89; 24:5).

However, based on this explanation two matters remain to be explained with regard to the verse:

(i) Why the word *Ghaffār* (most Forgiving)—the exaggerated form indicating much [forgiveness]—is used. What does His being most Forgiving have to do with someone who commits a single sin then repents?

(ii) It means that whoever breaks a single law does not believe in it even if he acknowledges that it has come from God and he only disobeyed pursuant to desire not as a rejection of the law—unless of course it is said that because the verse contains: repents and believes it only applies to polytheists and those who reject one of God's laws. The problem with this explanation is obvious.

It could be said that repentance and belief mean repentance from polytheism and belief in God just as these two explanations are what they mean in most places in the Qurʿan in which repentance and belief are mentioned together.

Based on this, "and does good" means obeying His rules by obeying His commandments and refraining from [doing] what He has forbidden. The verse means that if one repents from polytheism and complies with the laws by which he has been charged, *then surely I am most Forgiving of his sins*. I will forgive him mistake after mistake. Thus, [reference to] *much forgiveness* is because many are the instances of [forgiveness]. He said something similar—about forgiveness of sins—in: *If you shun the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins* (4:31).

Thus, His Words, *And most surely I am most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good*, applies to the verse 31 in Sūrah al-Nisāʾ (The Women). There remains in it an extra condition which qualifies the rule on forgiveness, namely the meaning of His Words, *then continues to follow in the right direction*, that is being guided to the way. It is clear that forgiveness is only allowed for a believer who does good if he proceeds to it by way of its route and comes to it through its door.

We do not find in His Words anything which qualifies the effectiveness and acceptance of belief in God and good deeds apart from belief in the Messenger in the sense of surrendering to him and obeying him both in major and minor matters, learning the religion from him, travelling the path which he walks and following him without obstinacy or innovation attributable to following the footsteps of the Satan. In summary, (this is)

his guardianship over the believers in their religion and world[ly affairs]. God has legislated his guardianship, has made his obedience obligatory, and has made it a duty to learn from him and follow his example in great many verses, the citing of which is unnecessary and for examination of which there is no space—for (example): *The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves* (33:6).

Even though most of the Israelites believed in God and in Moses and Aaron's message, they were hesitant or quasi-hesitant about their guardianship as explicitly indicated by all their stories in God's Book. That may be the reason why the verse, *And most surely I am most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction,* comes after their being forbidden to be inordinate and making them fear of God's wrath. It is clear that following the right direction in the verse according to where all the other verses lead is belief in the Messenger by following him in the matter of the religion and worldly affairs. In other words, it [means] being guided to his guardianship. The above should clarify the problem with the following interpretations of what the exegetes have said about His Words, *then continues to follow the right direction*:

(i) Continuing to follow the right direction means adhering to and continuing to believe as long as one lives.

(ii) It means a second person would not doubt his belief.

iii) Following the Prophet's tradition and not following the path of innovation.

(iv) *Ihtidā'* means knowing that there is reward for his action.

(v) It means cleansing the heart of bad manners.

(vi) It means protecting belief from contradicting the truth with regards to anything because *ihtidā'* in this sense is not belief and action.

The meaning based on all these opinions is explanation of *ihtidā'* in a sense which does not ultimately mean belief or performing good deeds. However, there is no proof for anything they say.

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءِ عَلَىٰ أَثَرِي وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَىٰ ﴿٨٤﴾

(20:83-84) ***And what caused you to hasten from your people, O Moses? He said: They are here on my track and I hastened on to***

You, my Lord, that Thou mightest be pleased.

This recounts the conversation which took place between Him and Moses at the appointment on the mountain where the Torah was revealed as narrated in detail in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places). It is apparent from the context that it was a question about the reason which compelled Moses to hasten from his people (in order) to attend the appointment before they [did] as if it was expected that they would come to the mountain together but Moses attended ahead of them and left them behind. He was asked, *And what caused you to hasten from your people, O Moses?* He said, *They are here on my track*, that is, they are following my track and will soon catch up with me, *and I hastened on to You, my Lord, that Thou mightest be pleased,* that is, and the reason for my haste is to achieve Your pleasure, O Lord. It is likely that the people said to be on his track were the seventy men whom he chose for the meeting with his Lord. It is apparent from his leaving Aaron behind as a deputy over his people and all the other aspects of the story and his subsequent words: "… did then the time seem long to you …?" that it was not intended for all the Israelites to come to the mountain. The question in this verse [20:83] could have been addressed to Moses either when he first came to the meeting on the mountain or at the end of his time there because asking about the haste is not the haste itself which is accompanied by the journey and the meeting. If the question was not asked when he first came and attended, then His subsequent statement would find its place, *So surely We have tried your people after you …*

This is assuming that the trial occurred after they found Moses' absence too long—according to the narrations– and there is no need for the contrived efforts of the exegetes to explain the verses.

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾

(20:85) ***He said: So surely We have tried*** **(fatannā)** ***your people after you, and the Samaritan has led them astray.***

The word *fitnah* means trial and test. Attributing the leading astray to the Samaritan—who molded the calf and brought it out for them to worship and go astray—is because he was one of the contributory factors to it. The letter *fāʾ* (so) in *fa innā qad fatannā qawmaka* (So surely We have tried your people) is explanatory: It explains what is understood from

what was previously said, because what Moses said—*They are here on my track*—implies that his people were in a good state, nothing of concern having happened to them. It is as if he was being told: "Do not be [so] sure about what you have left behind, for, We have tried them and they have gone astray".

Saying "your people" explicitly is an example of using a noun where a pronoun would normally be used. Perhaps this indicates that "people" here is different from "people" in the previous verses: Here it refers to all of his tribe while there were about the seventy men whom Moses chose for the appointed time.

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ مَوْعِدِي ﴿٨٦﴾

(20:86) ***So Moses returned to his people wrathful, sorrowing. Said he: O my people! did not your Lord promise you a goodly promise: did then the time seem long to you, or did you wish that displeasure from your Lord should be due to you, so that you broke (your) promise to me?***

[The word] *ghaḍbān* is an adjective made to appear [like an epithet] [derived] from *al-ghaḍab* (anger). The same applies to *asif* from *asaf* which means sorrow and severe anger. *Mawʿid* means a promise. Their *ikhlāf* of the promise to him meant failing to do what they had promised him—taking his place properly while he was away (*ḥusn al-khilāfah baʿdahu*). This is supported by what He quotes elsewhere: *Evil is it that you have done after me* (7:150).

It means: So Moses returned to his people. The situation is that he was fiercely angry or sorrowful. He started criticizing them for what they had done. He said: "People, did not your Lord make a good promise to you?" This promise could refer to either:

i) the revelation of the Torah to them which contains His Law, and which, if accepted, brings about happiness in this world and the Hereafter; or

ii) His promise to deliver them from their enemy, place them in the land and exclusively bestow great blessings upon them. *Did then the time*

seem long to you … ? [The *ʿahd*] is the time Moses left them until they despaired of his returning and cohesion between them unraveled.

… or did you wish that displeasure from your Lord should be due to you: That is, you were inordinate in disbelief in Him after having believed and you worshiped the calf *so that you broke your promise to me* and did not keep your promise—taking my place suitably after I was gone. Some other explanations could be provided for, *so that you broke your promise to me*:

i) their breaking their promise to him means he ordered them to catch up with him but they failed to travel along his track.

ii) he ordered them to obey Aaron when he was gone until he returned to them. They disobeyed him.

There are other explanations.

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلَٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ
فَقَذَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَٰلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾

(20:87) ***They said: We did not break (our) promise to you of our own accord*** **(bi-malkinā)**, ***but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments*** **(zīnat)** ***of the people, then we made a casting of them*** **(fa-qadhafnāhā)**, ***and thus did the Samaritan cast*** **(alqā)**.

Malk is the gerund of *malaka*, *yamliku* (he controlled, he controls). Their words: "We did not break our promise to you of our own accord (*bi-malkinā*)" means, "We did not break our promise to you being in control of some of our affair", as is claimed. It is possible that it means: "Surely, we did not spend any of our money on fashioning the calf so as to have intended and been set on this matter. However, we were carrying loads of the people's jewelry. We threw them away, but the Samaritan took them, cast them in fire, and brought forth the calf". *Awzār* is the plural of *wizr* meaning weight. *Zīnah* means jewelry for example necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. *Qadhf*, *ilqāʾ* and *nabdh* [in verse 29:96] are similar—they mean casting or throwing.

… but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments of the people: [Means,] "However, we had loads of people's jewelry with us". It may mean Pharaoh's people.

… then we made a casting of them, and thus did the Samaritan cast: [Means,] "He cast in the fire what we cast down" or "cast what he had as

we had cast what we had—what we were given to carry". He then brought forth the calf.

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوا هَٰذَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(20:88) ***So he brought forth for them a calf, a (mere) body, which had a lowing, so they said: This is your god and the god of Moses, but he forgot.***

There is in the word *ikhrāj* (bringing forth) an indication that the way the calf was made was a secret to the people, out of their sight, so he surprised them by revealing and showing it. A *jasad* is a corpse which has no spirit in it so *jasad* cannot ever be said of something with a soul. Therein is evidence that the calf did not have a soul or any life. *Khuwār* means the sound made by a calf.

His Words, *and thus did the Samaritan cast. So he brought forth for them a calf …* could be construed as independent words—either God's Words through what the people said coming to an end with, *then we cast them*. Based on this [explanation] the subject of (the clause), *they said*, is some of the people and the pronoun in, *So he brought forth for them*, obviously refers to others [among them].

It is said that the subject of (the clause), *he forgot* is

(i) Moses, meaning: They said: This is your god and the god of Moses, but Moses forgot this god of his but he is here. He went to look for him on the mountain.

(ii) The Samaritan, meaning he forgot Him after having remembered Him and believed in Him. That is, the Samaritan forgot his Lord, did what he did and led the people astray.

The apparent meaning of, *This is your god* [plural: *ilāhukum*] *and the god of Moses,* attributed as it is to the plural, is that there were those who helped the Samaritan in this affair.

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

(20:89) ***What! could they not see that it did not return to them a reply, and (that) it did not control any harm or benefit for them?***

This is a reproach to them because they worshiped it even though

they saw it does not reply when it is called by anyone, nor does it control any harm for them so that it may keep it away from them, nor is it in charge of any good for them so that it may attract and get it for them. It was self-evident to their intellects that a lord should answer whoever calls him seeking protection from some harm or acquisition of a benefit, and that a lord must be in charge of its servant's (*marbūb*) harm and benefit.

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي ﴿٩٠﴾

(20:90) ***And certainly Aaron had said to them before: O my people! You are only tried by it, and surely your Lord is the Beneficent, therefore follow me and obey my order.***

This emphasizes their censure and elaborates their sin. The implied meaning is: Not only did they not take admonition from the reminder that is self-evident to their intellects and did not stop by what their minds and eyes perceive, but also they disregarded what reached them through their ears. Indeed their Prophet Aaron told them that this was a test by which they had been tried, that their [true] Lord was the Beneficent, Mighty is His Name, and that it was their duty to follow him [Aaron] and obey his order. They replied to Aaron:

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩١﴾

(20:91) ***They said: We will by no means cease*** **(lan nabraḥa)** ***to keep to its worship*** **(ʿalayhi ʿākifīn)** ***until Moses returns to us*** **(ḥatta yarjiʿa ilayna Mūsā)**.

That is, we have to see what he [Moses] says about it and what he orders us to do.

قَالَ يَا هَارُونُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ۖ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾

(20:92-93) ***[Moses] said: O Aaron! What prevented you, when you saw them going astray, so that you did not follow me? Did you then disobey my order?***

He went back after speaking to the people about the matter of the calf to talk to his brother Aaron because he was one of the three people in charge in this test, whom he had appointed as a deputy over them and instructed him when he bade him farewell, saying: *Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers* (7:142).

It is as if, *what prevented you* has to it a sense of: "What made you?" That is, "What made you not follow me, preventing you from following?" Or, "What prevented you, to make you not follow me?" It is similar to: *He said: What hindered you so that you did not make obeisance when I commanded you?* (7:12)

It means: Moses said, reproaching Aaron: "What prevented you from following my way?" That is, stopping them from going astray. The severity is for God's sake: Did you then disobey my order to follow me and not follow the way of the mischief-makers?

قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي ۖ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾

(20:94) ***He said: O son of my mother! seize me not by my beard nor by my head; surely I was afraid lest you should say: You have caused a division among the children of Israel and not waited for my word.***

The root of *Yā bna umm* (O son of my mother) is *yā bna ummī*. It is a word that is said to appeal to one's mercy and compassion. He said it to calm Moses' anger. It is clear from, *seize me not by my beard nor by my head* that he had seized his beard and head in a state of anger to punish him, as He says elsewhere: … *and seized his brother by the head, dragging him towards him* (7:150).

… surely I was afraid lest you should say, You have caused a division among the children of Israel and not waited for my word: [This is] an explanation to an implied question indicated by the wording. In brief it means: "If I had stopped them from worshiping the calf, reaching the point it did, only some of the people would have obeyed me and that would have led to their dividing into two groups: obedient faithful and disobedient polytheists. That would have ruined the people, changing their unity and apparent consensus into disunity and disagreement, which may have led

to killing. You had ordered me to act well as you told me [vide 7:142) so I feared that when you came back and saw how the people had divided and taken sides, you would say: You have caused a division among the children of Israel and not waited for my word". This is what Aaron said as an apology. Moses forgave him and prayed for him and himself, as per Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places): He said: *My Lord! Forgive me and my brother and cause us to enter into Thy mercy, and Thou art the most Merciful of the merciful ones* (7:151).

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾

(20:95) ***He said: What was then your object, O Samaritan?***

After talking to his brother, he goes back to the Samaritan—who was one of the three in charge. He is the one who led the people astray. *Khaṭb* means a serious matter which concerns you. He is saying: What is this mighty affair which you came up with?

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي ﴿٩٦﴾

(20:96) ***He said: I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful [of the dust] from the footprints of the messenger, then I threw it in the casting; thus did my soul commend to me.***

Al-Rāghib says in *Mufradāt [al-Qurʿan]*: One says *baṣar* for the seeing organ as in: … *as the twinkling of an eye (al-baṣar)* (16:77); … *and when the eyes (al-abṣār) turned dull* (33:10), and for the faculty which is in it. The heart's faculty of perception is called *baṣīrah* or *baṣar* as in: … *but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight (baṣaruka) today is sharp* (50:22); *The eye (al-baṣar) did not turn aside, nor did it exceed the limit* (53:17). [Al-Rāghib says] The plural of *baṣar* is *abṣār* and the plural of *baṣīrah* is *baṣāʾir*. He says: … *but neither their ears, nor their eyes* (absāruhum), *availed them* (46:26).

The organ is hardly ever called *baṣīrah*. One says of the former [that is the eye]: *abṣartu* (I saw) and of the latter [that is the heart's faculty of perception]: *abṣartuhu* [fourth form: I perceived it] or *baṣurtu bihi* [first form: I perceived it]. One hardly ever says of the sense: *baṣurtu* [first form: I perceived] if it is not accompanied by seeing with the heart.

… so I took a handful* (qabḍah) *…: It is said that *qabḍah* is a gerund (*maṣdar*) used as an object (*mafʿūl*). Against this view it has been said that when a gerund (*maṣdar*) is used as on object it does not appear with *at* or *ah* at the end. For instance, one says: *Hadhihi ḥullat nasj al-Yaman* (This is a suit of the weaving of Yemen) but not: *Hadhihi nasjat al-Yaman* (This is a woven piece from Yemen).[1] Thus we should interpret *qabḍah* in this verse as an absolute object (*mafʿūl muṭlaq*). This view is refuted in turn by the fact that what is not allowed is the addition of the *tāʾ* ending denoting limitation or one time, not mere femininity as it is here. The problem with this view is that there is no evidence here for this *tāʾ* denoting femininity. Thus, it would be a reiteration of the claim as the proof for it (*mūṣāḍarah*).

… from the footprints of the messenger* (min athar al-Rasūl)*: *athar* means the imprint of a foot passing along the road after its passage. Etymologically it means what remains of something after it [has gone] in a way such that it is evidence of it, example, a building is a legacy (*athar*) of a builder. A product (*maṣnūʿ*) is the legacy of the fashioner (*ṣāniʾ*), knowledge (*ʿilm*) is the legacy of a scholar (*ʿālīm*) etc. Similar to this is a footprint on the ground left by a passer-by. A Messenger (*rasūl*) is someone who carries a Message. It is used in the Qur'an for a human Messenger who carries God's Message and the same word is used for Gabriel the Angel of revelation. He says: *Most surely it is the Word of an honoured messenger* (81:19).

Similarly, it is used for a number of messenger Angels, example: *Aye! And Our messengers with them write down* (43:80). He also says about the Angels: … *the Maker of the Angels, messengers flying on wings* (35:1).

The verse contains the Samaritan's response to the question which Moses had posed to him, *What was then your object, O Samaritan?* It was a question which aimed to get at the truth of that mighty matter which he had instigated and what had motivated him to it. The context provides evidence that His Words, *thus did my soul commend to me* is his response for the rationale which led and drove him to it—that his soul's commanding was what motivated him to commit that action. As for explaining the truth of his deed, it is indicated by, *I saw what they did not see so I took a handful from the footprints of the messenger*. There is no clarification for

1 *Nasj* is a *maṣdar* (infinitive, gerund) that is used as an object here, where it is not used as *nasja*. (Trans.)

this statement neither in His Words within the narrative or that which is vaguely linked to it. Hence, the exegetes are in disagreement over its explanation.

The majority of scholars have explained it in accordance with some of the oral traditions on the story as the Samaritan's seeing Gabriel—who had come down to Moses to reveal, or, saw him when he had come down on a horse from Heaven in front of Pharaoh and his soldiers when they entered the sea and were drowned. He then took a handful of dust from his footprint or his horse's hoof print. One of the unique properties of this dust is that it is never thrown on anything without its coming to life and the spirit entering it. He kept the dust until he had fashioned the calf, threw some of the dust on it, which then came to life, moved and lowed.

I saw what they did not see means his seeing Gabriel when he came down on foot or on horseback. He saw him and recognized him but none of the other Israelites did. *So I took a handful from the footprints of the messenger* (athar al-rasūl), *then I threw it* means: "So I took a handful of dust from Gabriel's footprint or dust from Gabriel's horse's hoof print. The Messenger (*rasūl*) means Gabriel. *Fa nabadhtuhā* means: "I threw the handful on the melted jewelry and it came to life. It then had a low".

The biggest problem with this is that these oral traditions contradict the Book. The reader will see this in the upcoming discussion on the relevant oral traditions. For, His Words explicitly state (*yanuṣṣu ʿalā*) that the calf was a *jasad* which had a lowing. A *jasad* is a body which has no spirit and no life in it. It can never be said of a body which has a spirit and life. [This is] in addition to the reasons they have given for challenging the traditions which will be cited in the upcoming discussion of the relevant oral traditions.

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Muslim by way of the verse's exegesis that he said:

"There is no explicit statement in the Qur'an of what they say. There is another explanation, namely that what is meant by the Messenger is Moses. His *athar* means his tradition (*sunnah*) and his *rasm* means what he ordered and followed. Man says that a person (*Fulān*) *yaqtafī athar Fulān* (follows [in] the footsteps of another) but *yaqtaṣṣu atharāhu* if he obeys his prescription (*rasm*)".

Based on that, the explanation of the verse is that when Moses turned to reprimand the Samaritan and to ask him about the matter which drove

him to lead the people astray with the calf he said: "I saw what they did not see that is I realized that what the people believed in was not true. I had taken a handful of your vestige that is some of your religion so I cast it aside (*fa nabadhtuhā*) and did not cling to it". Referring to Moses in the third person is similar to when someone addresses a prince: What does the prince say about matter x? His calling him, Messenger, was a kind of mockery because he did not believe in him and rejected him as His Words which quote the unbelievers state: *O you to whom* (ilayhi) *the Reminder has been revealed! you are most surely insane* (15:6).

Obviously, based on this explanation, the calf's lowing was artificial, which is contrary to the previous explanation. The problem with this is that the verse implies that the "casting" was subsequent to "taking a handful", which was itself subsequent to "seeing". However, the suggested interpretation implies that the "casting" was subsequent to "seeing" and "seeing" to "taking a handful". If what he said were true, [the following] would have been stated: "I saw what they did not see and so I cast with the handful I had taken from the Messenger's footprint" or "I took a handful of the Messenger's footprint, saw what they did not see and cast it".

Secondly, it would mean having to explain it with, *thus did my soul commend to me* as an allusion to the reason he formed the calf and an answer to Moses' question, *What was then your object?* In summary, he did it because of being commanded by his soul to lead the people astray, so the beginning of the verse means that he was not a monotheist while the end of the verse means that he was not idolatrous—thus neither monotheistic nor idolatrous, even though the subsequent direct speech quotation of Moses, *and look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it …* (20:97) [means] that he [that is, the Samaritan] was idolatrous.

Thirdly: Addressing Moses in the third person instead of the second person is unlikely.

Another meaning could be conceived for the verse based on what one of them said—that the burdens of the ornaments, which they were carrying, were the gold jewelry from the Egyptians which Moses had ordered them to carry. They belonged to Moses or were attributed to him. This is what is meant by the Messenger's vestige (*athar al-rasūl*). Thus, the Samaritan is describing what he did as his having vision in the matter of goldsmithery and transformation. He was good at making

statues—knowledge of which the people did not have—and his soul enticed him into making a statue of a calf for them out of gold. Thereafter, he took and grasped a handful of the Messenger's *athar* that is gold jewelry, threw and cast it in the fire and brought it out as a calf—a body for them—which had a lowing. Its lowing was through air entering the gap in its inside and exiting through its mouth from pressure with this artificial filling.

There is still the problem with Moses being referred to as the Messenger in the third person instead of the second person, with the people's jewelry being called the Messenger's *athar* and his making the calf—which he worshiped—enticement by the soul.

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ ۖ وَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِلَٰهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا ۖ لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾

(20:97) ***He said: Begone then, surely for you it will be in this life to say, Touch (me) not; and surely there is a threat for you, which shall not be made to fail to you, and look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter it a (wide) scattering in the sea.***

This is Moses' punishment upon him, following confirmation of the sin.

He said: Begone then—(which means) sentencing him to exile from the society such that he would not mix with the people or touch anyone and no one would touch him, taking or giving, sheltering, keeping company, speaking or any other aspects of human society; it is one of the most difficult kinds of punishment.

… surely for you it will be in this life to say, Touch (me) not: In summary, it means: It is settled and you deserve to live alone as long as you live—an allusion to his persistent distress from loneliness and isolation.

It is claimed that it is a supplication by Moses against him and that as a result of that, he was afflicted with an incurable disease. No one would come close to him without becoming severely feverish. He would tell anyone who came near to him: "Touch (me) not, touch (me) not".

It is claimed that he was afflicted with [devilish] insinuation—he

would go wild and flee from everyone he met and would call out: "Touch (me) not". It would be a good explanation if the tradition were authentic.

… and surely there is a threat for you, which shall not be made to fail to you: The apparent meaning is that it is a foretelling of his doom at a time specified and inevitably decreed by God. It is possible that it is a supplication against him. It means punishment in the Hereafter.

And look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long): that is, kept and continued to be worshiped [and] adhered to. There is an indication in this that he had adopted it as a god for him to worship.

… we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter it **(la-nansifannahu)** ***a (wide) scattering*** **(nasfan)** ***in the sea:*** *Majmaʿ [al-Bayān]* says: Scatter (*nasafa*) the grain means to scatter it with the winnow (*minsāf*) so that its husks will fly from it.

It means: "I swear that we will burn it with fire then we will certainly scatter it a (wide) scattering in the sea". Talking about burning, it has been relied on as evidence that it was living—of flesh and blood. If it had been of gold, it would have made no sense to talk about burning it. This supports the majority's aforementioned exegesis—that it became living, with a spirit, through casting dust taken from Gabriel's footprint on it. However, it only proves that it was not pure gold, no more. Some of them believe it to be possible that "we will certainly burn it" (*la nuḥariqannahu*) is from the nipping of iron when it is cooled with a cooling apparatus, meaning: We will surely cool it with a cooling apparatus and surely scatter it all in the sea. This is more appropriate.

إِنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِى لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

(20:98) ***Your God is only God, there is no god but He; He comprehends all things in (His) knowledge.***

The apparent meaning is that these are the last words Moses says to the Samaritan and the Israelites. He establishes through this statement, Him being the only God. No one else—calf or any other hypothetical partner—shares that with Him. This along with its context is subtle reasoning. He uses as evidence that He is God, and it's a fact that there is no other god apart from Him and thus they have no god apart from Him. It is claimed that His Words, *He comprehends all things* proves that a non-existent can be referred to as a thing because it can be comprehended. However,

this [statement] is wrong because the verse means that everything that is called a thing is comprehended in His knowledge not that everything that is comprehended in His knowledge can be called a thing. That which avails someone trying to prove [the statement] is the latter not the former.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Al-Tawḥīd* says via its chain of narration back to Ḥamzah ibn al-Rabīʾ on the authority of whom he stated: I was in al-Bāqir's seated gathering when ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd came to see him and said to him: May I be made your sacrifice, God's Words, Blessed and Almighty is He: *and to whomsoever My wrath is due shall perish indeed*. What is that wrath? al-Bāqir replied: "It is punishment, ʿAmr. Surely, whoever claims that God, Mighty and Sublime is He, changes from one thing to another, attributes to Him the attribute of a creature. Surely, God, Mighty and Sublime is He, is not provoked or changed by anything".

Author's comment: Something to the same effect is narrated with an incomplete chain of transmission (*mursal*) by al-Ṭabrasī in *al-Iḥtijāj*.

(2) al-Ṣādiq said: God, the Most Holy, the Most High, accepts only the righteous deeds. God does not accept anything without one's fulfilling the conditions of the covenant. Those who remain faithful to God, the Most Holy, the Most High, with regard to His condition of the covenant and follow what is prescribed in the covenant they will receive blessings from Him and He will keep His promise. God, the Most Holy, the Most High, has informed the people of the path of guidance and has sanctioned for them the laws of Sharia as beacons. He has told them how to follow the laws. He has said:
(20:82) *I am All-forgiving to the righteously striving believers who repent and follow the right guidance;*
(5:27) *God only accepts the offerings of the pious ones.*

(3) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Layla said: Those who are pious before God about His commandments meet God as believers in whatever Prophet Muhammad has brought to them. (*al-Kāfī*)

(4) al-Bāqir said: Then continues to follow the right direction to our—the People of the Household's—*wilāyah* so I swear by God, if a man worships God all his life between the [Black Stone's]

> Corner (*al-rukn*) and [Abraham's] Station (*maqām*) then dies and does not come to our *wilāyah*, God will throw him on his face in hell.[1]

Author's comment: This is (also) narrated in *al-Kāfī*[2], *in Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī[3]; and in Ibn Shahrāshub's *Manāqib*[4] and something similar on the authority of Abu Ḥamzah on the authority of al-Sajjād, worded: "to us the People of the Household".

Wilāyah in the hadith means being in charge of people's religious and worldly affairs, that is, their being referred to in learning religious and legal knowledge, and administration of societal affairs. It [the *wilāyah*] was the Prophet's as explicitly stated by the Book in the verse like: *The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves* (33:6).

It was then assigned to his progeny, the People of his Household after him in the Book in [verses] such as *āyat al-wilāyah* [5:55] and through what is widely-narrated (*mutawātir*) from him via so many chains as to be indubitable for example, *hadith al-thaqalayn*, *hadith al-manzilāh* etc. Even though the verse is positioned between verses addressing the Israelites—that is apparently so—it is not restricted by anything which makes it exclusive to them, preventing it from applying to anyone else. Thus, it applies to others just as it applies to them. As for its applicability to them, it is because Moses as their Imam had a form of this *wilāyah* which other Prophets had. Thus, his nation had to follow him and enter under his *wilāyah*. As for its applicability to others, it is because the verse is general and not particular to one people to the exclusion of others. Thus, it guides people during the time of the Messenger to his *wilāyah*, and, after him to the *wilāyah* of the Imams from the People of his Household. Hence, *wilāyah* has a single meaning regardless of whom it is attributed to.

Once the reader knows the above, the invalidity of what al-Alūsī says in *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-maʿānī* will be clear to him. After citing the aforementioned

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1 *Majmaʿ [al-Bayān]* narrated by Al-Ḥakīm Abu al-Qāsim al-Ḥasakānī via his [own] chain of narration and al-ʿAyyashi cites it in his exegesis via several chains of narration.

2 Via its chain of narration on the authority of Sadīr from the Imām

3 Via its chain of narration on the authority of al-Ḥārith ibn ʿUmar from the Imām

4 On the authority of Abū al-Jārūd and Abū al-Ṣabāh al-Kanāsī from al-Ṣādiq

narration from *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of al-Bāqir he says: "You know that their *wilāyah* and love for them (may God be pleased with them) according to us is indubitably obligatory. However, construing being guided (*al-ihtidāʾ*) in the verse as that—given that it is an account of what God spoke to the Israelites about, during the time of Moses —would mean having to say that He, Mighty and Sublime is He, told the Israelites about the People of the Household and imposed their *wilāyah* upon them at that point. That is not confirmed in any authentic narrations.

What put him [al-Alūsī] in this [predicament] was interpreting *wilāyah* as love, followed by his construing the verse as being exclusive to the Israelites, ultimately drawing the conclusion which he stated. *Wilāyah* in the verses and oral traditions does not mean love. Rather, it is the administrative rule and disposal of affairs, part of which means the necessity of following and a duty of obedience. This is what the Imams of the People of the Household claim for themselves. As for love, it is an expanded meaning of *wilāyah* in its true sense and of those things normally concomitant to it. It is the signification of complete accord of the verse and oral tradition evidence for love of the near of kin.

There is another—third—meaning of the People of the Household's *wilāyah*, namely that God is in charge of the affairs of His servant and so He regulates his affairs and freely administers his business because of the sincerity of his worship of Him. This *wilāyah* is primarily God's—thus He is the *Waliyy* and there is no *waliyy* apart from Him. It is only attributed to the People of the Household because they are the foremost, the first of the nation to open this door. It is also an attribution by expansion just as the straight path (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*) is in His Words attributed to Him primarily and to those upon whom God has bestowed favors—the Prophets, truthful ones, martyrs and the pious—somewhat by expansion. In summary, the *wilāyah* in the hadith in *Majmaʿ [al-bayān]* means regulation and ownership (*mulk al-tadbīr*). The noble verse is general and applies to others just as it applies to the Israelites. He only explains "being guided" (*ihtidāʾ*) in the verse as *wilāyah* with regard to this nation. This is the correct explanation.

(5) *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī says [about the Words]: *So surely We have tried your people after you:* [It means], We tested them after you and the Samaritan has led them astray with the calf which they worshiped. The reason for that is that when God promised to Moses

to reveal the Torah and the Tablets over thirty days, he told the Israelites (about it) and went to the meeting, leaving his brother in charge of his people. When the thirty days passed and Moses did not return, they disobeyed and wanted to kill Aaron. They said: Surely Moses lied and fled from us. Thereafter, Iblīs came to them in the form of a man and told them: Moses has fled from you and is never coming back to you so bring me your jewelry so that I can adopt a god for you to worship. The Samaritan was at the forefront of Moses' people on the day when God drowned Pharaoh and his companions. [The Samaritan] then looked at Gabriel [the Arch Angel] who was riding an animal in the form of a mare (*ramakah*)[1]. Wherever it placed its hoof that spot of the earth started moving [as if alive]. The Samaritan—who was one of Moses' choicest companions—looked at it and took dust from Gabriel's mare's hoof when it was moving. He put it in a bag. Thereafter it was in his possession and he would brag about it to the Israelites. When Iblīs came to them and they adopted the calf, he said to the Samaritan: Bring the dust which is with you. The Samaritan then brought it and cast it inside the calf. Once inside it, the calf began to move and low. Fur and hair grew on it. The Israelites then prostrated before it. The number of those who prostrated before it was seventy thousand. Aaron then said to them—as God narrates: *O my people! you are only tried by it, and surely your Lord is the Beneficent God, therefore follow me and obey my order. They said: We will by no means cease to keep to its worship until Moses returns to us*. They decided to kill Aaron and so he fled from them. They continued that way [that is, worshiping the calf] until Moses' appointed time was complete—forty nights. When it was the tenth day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, God revealed the knowledge of the tablets including the Torah, the rules of conduct and the stories they would need. Thereafter, God revealed to Moses: *So surely We have tried your people after you, and the Samaritan has led them astray.* They worshiped the calf and it had a lowing. He then said: O, Lord, the calf is from the Samaritan but from whom is the lowing? He said: From Me,

1 A *ramakah* is a mare used for breeding.

Moses. When I saw them having turned away from Me to the calf, I wanted to increase their trial. Thereafter, as God narrates, *Moses returned to his people wrathful, sorrowing. Said he: O my people! did not your Lord promise you a goodly promise: did then the time seem long to you, or did you wish that displeasure from your Lord should be due to you, so that you broke (your) promise to me?* He then threw down the tablets and grabbed his brother's beard and head, pulling him towards himself. He then said: When you saw them go astray, what stopped you from following me. Have you disobeyed my order? Thereafter Aaron said, as narrated by God: *O son of my mother! seize me not by my beard nor by my head; surely I was afraid lest you should say: You have caused a division among the children of Israel and not waited for my word.* The Israelites told him: *We did not break (our) promise to you of our own accord, but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments of the people*, that is, their jewelry; then we cast them. We cast inside it the dust which the Samaritan brought. Then the Samaritan brought out the calf and it had a lowing. Moses then said to him: *What was then your object, O Samaritan?* The Samaritan said: I saw (Gabriel) what they did not see, so I took a handful (of the dust) from the footprints of the Messenger, that is, from under the hoof of Gabriel's mare in the sea, *fa nabadhtuha* that is, so I held onto it. *Thus did my soul commend*, that is, entice, *to me*. Moses then took out the calf, burned it with fire and cast it in the sea. He then said to the Samaritan: *Begone then, surely for you it will be in this life to say, Touch (me) not*, that is, as long as you and your offspring are alive this mark will remain among you: saying, "Touch (me) not", so that people know that you are Samaritans and will not be deceived by you. They remain to this day in Egypt and the Levant known as untouchables. Moses then nearly killed the Samaritan but God revealed to him: "Do not kill him, Moses, for he is generous". Thereafter, Moses said to him: *and look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter it a (wide) scattering in the sea. Your God is only God, there is no god but He; He comprehends all things in (His) knowledge.*

Author's comment: It is likely of what we have cited that His Words:

"The reason for that …" are not the end of the oral tradition at the beginning of which he said: "with the calf which they worshiped". Rather, it is Al-Qummi's words which he has paraphrased from the oral traditions of others, as it is his custom in most of the citations within his exegesis, when discussing the reasons for the revelations of verses. There is evidence for that through the story which he cites. True, what he says in the course of the story: "We did not break (our) promise to you" is an oral tradition, as is: "we cast inside it the dust which the Samaritan brought" an oral tradition and likewise: "Moses then nearly …" is the content of a tradition narrated on the authority of al-Ṣādiq. Assuming it is an oral tradition and the conclusion of the previous oral tradition, it is an expedient tradition (*mursal*) and the authority is ambiguous (*muḍmar*).

(6) It has been narrated on the authority of ʿAlī : When Moses hastened to his Lord, the Samaritan proceeded, gathered all the Israelites' jewelry he could and cast it into a calf. He then threw the handful inside it and behold, it was a calf—a body which had a lowing. The Samaritan then told them: This is your god and Moses' god. Aaron then told them: People, did your Lord not make a beautiful promise to you? …[1]

Author's comment: The words attributed in it to Aaron are attributed by the Qur'an to Moses.

(7) It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās: When Pharaoh and his companions rushed upon the sea, Pharaoh was on a horse—a black stallion—the stallion was afraid to rush into the sea and so Gabriel appeared upon a mare. When the stallion saw it, it chased after it and the Samaritan knew that it was Gabriel because when his mother was afraid that he would be slaughtered, she left him in a cave and closed him inside. Thereafter, Gabriel would come to him and feed him with his fingers. On one of them there was milk, on another there was honey and on another there was oil. He continued feeding him until he grew up. Then, when he saw him in the sea, he knew him. He then took a handful from the horse's footsteps. That is, he took a handful from under the hoof and it so occurred to the Samaritan's heart: You will not cast

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by al-Faryābī, ʿAbd ibn Ḥāmid, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Al-Ḥakīm and deemed to be authentic.

it onto a single thing, saying Be x without its becoming [it]. The handful remained with him in his hand until he crossed the sea. When Moses and the Israelites crossed the sea, God drowned the family of Pharaoh. Moses said to his brother Aaron: Represent me among my people and do right. Do not follow the path of the mischief makers. Moses proceeded to the meeting with his Lord. The Israelites had some of Pharaoh's family's jewelry. It was as if they eschewed it so they took it out to put in the fire to consume it. When they gathered it together, the Samaritan said so to the handful as he cast it there: Be a calf—a body with a lowing. Thus it then became a calf—a body with a lowing. He would introduce wind through its bottom and it would come out of its mouth, a sound being heard. He then said: This is your god and Moses' god. They then devoted themselves to the calf, worshiping it. Thereafter, Aaron said: *O my people! you are only tried by it, and surely your Lord is the Beneficent God, therefore follow me and obey my order. They said: We will by no means cease to keep to its worship until Moses returns to us.*[1]

Author's comment: As is evident, the oral tradition does not contain the dust from the hoof's having the special attribute of bringing to life. However it does contain something greater, namely its having the special attribute of the word of creation [that is "Be" and it will be]. The Samaritan, on this basis, only used it to take the jewelry out of the fire in the form of a calf—a body with a lowing. Thus it emerged as he wanted without an ordinary natural cause. As for life, there is no mention of it. On the contrary, the literal meaning of His Words—introducing wind inside it and its leaving (the body) producing a sound—is (the fact that) its not being characterized by life. Further what it says about the Samaritan's mother hiding him in a cave after she gave birth to him, out of fear that Pharaoh would slaughter him and Gabriel's coming to him and feeding him with his fingers until he grew up cannot be relied upon. The Samaritan's being an Israelite is uncertain. Indeed, Ibn ʿAbbās himself denied it in Saʿid ibn Jubayr's detailed account of the story. It is narrated on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that he was of the people of Kirman.

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Jarīr.

(8) al-Saddī said: Moses set off to his Lord and He spoke to him. When He spoke to him He said: *And what caused you to hasten from your people, O Moses? He said: They are here on my track and I hastened on to You, my Lord, that Thou mightiest be pleased. He said: So surely We have tried your people after you, and the Samaritan has led them astray*. When He told him their news, he said: Lord, this Samaritan told them to adopt the calf. Did you see the spirit—who blew it into it? The Lord said: I [did]. He said: Lord, then You led them astray. So Moses returned to his people wrathful, *asifan*, that is, sorrowful. Said he: *O my people! did not your Lord promise you a goodly promise … We did not break (our) promise to you* (bi malkina)*, that is, of our own accord but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments of the people*, that is, of the Egyptians' jewelry then we cast them, and thus did the Samaritan cast. So he brought forth for them a calf, a (mere) body, which had a lowing and so they devoted themselves to it, worshiping it while it was lowing and walking. Thereafter, Aaron said to them: *O my people! you are only tried by it*, that is, you were tested by the calf. *He said: What was then your khaṭb*, O Samaritan? that is, your object … *and look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it.* He then took it, slaughtered it, then nipped it with the cooling apparatus, that is, pulverized it then scattered it in the sea. Thus not a single river was left flowing that day without some of it falling into it. Moses said to them: Drink from it, and so they drank. Gold came out onto the moustache of whoever loved it. That is what is meant by: (2:93) *And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief.*[1]

Author's comment: It is amazing what the story says about gold being caused to grow on the moustache of those who loved the calf as a result of drinking the water and construing His Words: *And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief,* as this. The words, *into their hearts* are an excellent proof that being made to imbibe means love for it manifesting in and penetrating into their hearts and not drinking the water into which it was scattered after it was

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr cited by* Ibn Abī Ḥātim

pulverized. Even more amazing is the combination of slaughtering it and pulverizing it. Only an animal of flesh and blood can be slaughtered. Pulverization and cooling can only be feasibly done to a body cast in gold or another metal.

(9) It is narrated on the authority of ʿAlī: When Gabriel descended and took Moses up to Heaven, the Samaritan saw him from among the people and took a handful from the horse's hoof print. Gabriel carried Moses behind him until, when he drew near to Heaven's gate, he ascended and God wrote the tablets, [Moses] hearing the scratching of the pens on the tablets. Thereafter, when He told him that his people had gone astray after him, Moses descended, took the calf and burned it.[1]

Author's comment: It says something more astonishing than those preceding it, namely Gabriel's taking Moses up to Heaven. The context provided by the verses telling the story in this and other chapters does not support this. Even more astonishing is [the Samaritan's] taking dust from Gabriel's horse's hoof print when he descended to take Moses up while he was on the mountain and the Samaritan was with the Israelites. If this descent and ascent are true it would have been at the end of the meeting but the Samaritan led the Israelites astray days earlier. There is a similar problem with the rest of the oral traditions which say that he took dust from under Gabriel's horse's hoof when he appeared to Pharaoh so that his horse would enter the sea because Pharaoh and his companions only entered the sea after the Israelites emerged from the sea—along with the Samaritan, if he was there. What with the width of the sea, where was the Samaritan in relation to Pharaoh?

The biggest problem with these oral traditions as alluded to above is their contradicting the Book because the Book explicitly states that the calf was a lifeless body. They confirm that it was a body with life and a spirit. An oral tradition, even if it is authentic in terms of hadith, is not authoritative if it contradicts the Book. Otherwise, the Book would cease to be authoritative for contradicting an oral tradition, and the Book's authenticity would depend on its being in agreement with an oral tradition or at least not contradicting it. Even though the probative value of

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of ʿAbd ibn Hamid, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abu al-Shaykh.

an oral tradition and indeed the Prophet's very words reported by the narration and the Prophet's Prophethood depend on the probative value of the Book's literal meaning(s). This is an obvious circular argument. It is discussed in full in *ʿilm al-uṣūl* (the study of legal methodology).

Secondly: They are solitary reports (*akhbār aḥād*) and it makes no sense to treat (*jaʿl*) *akhbār aḥād* as probative of anything else apart from religious laws (*aḥkām sharʿiyyah*). *Jaʿl tashrīʿī* really means treating apparent proof as having real consequences which depends on the proof's having a practical effect, as with laws. As for anything else, it has no effect such that it should be treated as probative. For example if there is an oral tradition which says that the *basmalah* is part of the chapter treating this as probative means having to say the *basmalah* when reciting during prayer. As for when there is oral tradition for example, on the Samaritan's being a man from Kirman and it is a dubitable *khabar wāḥid*, treating it as probative means treating belief in it as certainty [of it] which is a creationary decree which is impossible and not a legislative one at all. It is discussed in full in *ʿilm al-uṣūl*. One (scholar) who was not satisfied with the widely accepted exegesis of the verse contained in these oral traditions has raised a number of baseless objections and in return, one (scholar) who supports these traditions has responded with more vile explanations.

One of them supports the aforementioned exegesis by saying that it is exegesis by the oral tradition of the best of generations—the first generation, the generation of the Companions and successors. What is said in it is not based on [personal] opinion because it is treated as *khabar marfūʿ* [oral tradition with an elevated ascription to the Prophet]. To deviate from it is to go astray.

Reply:

(i) Because a particular generation is considered to be the best generation does not mean that everything attributed to them is probative. There is no concomitance between a generation being the best and everything they say being true and honest; every opinion being correct and every act being right. There are a large number of contradictory statements and conflicting oral traditions in these narrations attributed to them. Pure reason dictates that one of the two contradictory statements has to be invalid and one of the two conflicting [statements] has to false. A critical researcher should demand proof for what they say just as anyone else would be asked for it. They will be excellent where they show excellence.

(ii) An instance being one in which (personal) opinion is not reported within the oral tradition and narrated on their own authority—example, the particulars of the story—meaning that what they have said is to be treated as *khabar marfūʾ* [oral tradition with an ascription elevated to the Prophet] which only avails them if they are able to attribute their narrations to the Prophet . However, we find that even some of the Companions will often narrate oral traditions which are attributable to the Jews and others. Anyone who refers to oral traditions based on the stories of Dhū al-Qarnayn, the garden of Iram, the story of Moses and the Khidr, the Amalekites, Moses' miracles and what is stated about the Prophets' errors and numerous other matters will not be left with any doubt, thereof. Their being *marfūʾah* does not mean that they have to be deemed to be attributable to the Prophet.

(iii) Let us concede they should be treated as *marfūʾah*. Nevertheless, *marfūʾah* and even authentic ones are of no probative value apart from for laws. [This is] especially [true] of those which contradict the Book as referred to above.

(10) It is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir: Some of what Moses said confidentially to God was: Lord, this Samaritan fashioned the calf. Who fashioned the lowing? God, Blessed and Almighty is He, then revealed to him: Surely, that is My test so do not inquire into it.[1]

Author's comment: This explanation appears in various oral traditions with different wordings. The heart of the explanation for that is that due to widespread narrations, the effect, especially on the Prophetic ones on account of the writing down of hadith being prohibited in the first century AH until some of the narrators put [them] in a determinist shell. They are not [determinist]—it is leading astray as a punishment and not leading astray *ab initio*. He frequently attributes this kind of leading astray to Himself in His Book, for example:

> (2:26) *He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors.*

(11) The best explanation in the oral traditions for this "causing to err" is Al-Qummī's aforementioned oral tradition:

"O, Lord, the calf is from the Samaritan but from whom is the

1 *Al-Maḥāsin* via its chain of narration on the authority of al-Waṣāfī

lowing? He said: From Me, Moses. When I saw them having turned away from Me to the calf, I wanted to increase their trial" and what appears in Rāshid ibn Saʾd's oral tradition narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* which says: "Lord, who put the spirit in it? He replied: I [did]. He said: Then You led them astray, Lord! He said: Moses, chief of the Prophets, father of the rulers, I saw that in their hearts and facilitated it for them …" [and so on to the end of the hadith]

(12) al-Ṣādiq said: Surely, Moses almost killed the Samaritan but God revealed to him: *Do not kill him Moses, because he is generous*. (*Majmaʿ [al-bayān]*)

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Verses 99-114

These verses involve a sense of threat following Moses' story. They refer to the horrors of the Day of Resurrection as a means of warning.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْراً ﴿٩٩﴾

(20:99) ***Thus do We relate to you (some) of the news of what has gone before; and indeed We have given to you a Reminder from Ourselves.***

It is likely that the allusion is to the uniqueness of Moses' story. "What has gone before" means the affairs and past events and the extinct nations that is, thus did We relate Moses' story and in this way, We shall relate to you the tidings of past events and nations.

His Words, *and indeed We have given to you a Reminder from Ourselves* mean the Noble Qur'an or the various pieces of knowledge which it contains by which God reminds—facts, stories, lessons, ethics, laws, etc.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْراً ﴿١٠٠﴾

(20:100) ***Whoever turns aside from it, he shall surely bear a burden*** **(wizran)** ***on the day of resurrection;***

The pronoun "it" refers to the Reminder. *Wizr* means burden or sin. The context provided by "bearing" makes it likely that the former is intended. The indefinite form of *wizr* indicates the magnitude of its importance. It means whoever turns away from the Reminder will bear a burden of great severity and bitter effect. Sin is metaphorically likened to a burden (*wizr*) that one carries with difficulty because one is subject to his sin.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِمْلاً ﴿١٠١﴾

(20:101) ***Abiding in this (state), and evil will it be for them to bear on the day of resurrection;***

Their abiding in the *wizr* (burden or sin) means their abiding in its

jazāʾ that is, its punishment somewhat metonymically. The use of the plural in *khālidīn* (abiding) is with regard to the meaning of (the clause), *Whoever turns aside from it* just as the use of *aʾraḍa* [turns aside, singular] and, *he shall surely bear* is with regard to the wording. Thus, the verse is like His Words: … *and whoever disobeys* (wa man yaʾṣī) *God and His Messenger surely he shall have the fire of hell to abide* (khālidīn) *therein for a long time* (72:23).

Ignoring matters of wording, *Whoever turns aside from it, he shall surely bear a burden on the day of resurrection; abiding in this (state)* is one of the verses which most clearly indicate that a person is only punished for his actions and abides therein. This is the physical manifestation of deeds (*tajassum al-aʿmāl*).

… and evil will it be for them **(wa sāʾa lahum)** ***to bear on the day of resurrection:*** *Sāʾa* is one of the verbs of disparagement such as *biʾsa* (evil is). It means: What an evil burden their burden will be on the Day of Resurrection. *Ḥiml* and *ḥaml* both mean the same thing [burden]. [The only difference] is that *ḥiml* is what is carried externally, for example, on the back whereas *ḥaml* is that which is carried internally, for example, a child in the womb.

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ ۚ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

(20:102) ***On the day when the trumpet shall be blown, and We will gather the guilty, blue-eyed, on that day.***

"On the day when the trumpet shall be blown" is in apposition to "the day of resurrection" in the previous verse. Blowing the trumpet is an allusion to summoning and calling. That is why He follows it later on with: *On that day they shall follow the inviter, there is no crookedness in him* (20:108).

Zurq is the plural of *azraq* (blue) from *al-zarqah* (blueness) which is a particular color. Al-Farrāʾ says that their being *zurq* means their being blind because when the light of the eyes goes, the iris turns blue. It is a good explanation and is supported by: … *and We will gather them together on the day of resurrection on their faces, blind* (17:97).

It is claimed that it means the blueness of their bodies from exhaustion and thirst. The blueness of their eyes is said because blue is the worst and most hated eye color among the Arabs. It is said: It means their being thirsty because severe thirst changes the blackness of the eye, making it

look blue. They are all unsatisfactory explanations.

يَتَخَافَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

(20:103-104) ***They shall consult together secretly: You did tarry but ten. We know best what they say, when the fairest of them in course would say: You tarried but a day.***

Takhāfut means the people speaking to each other in a low voice. That is by the people of the assembly because of the horror of the scene.

The clause, *You did not tarry but ten* is an explanation of their words which they say together secretly. As indicated by the context, the sentence means: They say: You have not tarried but ten days before the assembly. They consider their tarrying there to be little in relation to what is suggested to them by the assessment of eternal abiding.

We know best what they say, when the fairest of them in course would say: You tarried but a day: That is, We have comprehensive knowledge of everything they say by way of assessment of their tarrying *when the fairest of them in course*—that is, the most truthful among them—says: *You have tarried but a day*. The one who says this is only the fairest of them in course and the most truthful among them because there is no comparison between limited, earthly tarrying and the tarrying of eternal abiding. His deeming it to be a day—less than ten—is closer to the truth than deeming it to be ten. Even so, it is a relative statement, not a real one. The true statement is what God cites: *And those who are given knowledge and faith will say: Certainly you tarried according to the ordinance of God till the day of resurrection, so this is the day of resurrection, but you did not know* (30:56).

The meaning of this tarrying will be discussed fully in the exegesis of that verse, if God pleases.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

(20:105) ***And they ask you about the mountains. Say: My Lord will carry them away from the roots.***

The verse indicates that they asked him [the Prophet] about the state of the mountains on the day of resurrection. [The question] was then

answered by the verses.

Say: My Lord will carry them away from the roots, that is, will uproot them and stir them up. None of them will remain in their place.

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

(20:106) ***Then leave it a plain, smooth level.***

Qāʿ means level ground. *Ṣafṣaf* means smooth level ground. It means He will leave it as a smooth level ground with nothing on it. It is as if the [masculine] pronoun to refer to the earth [feminine in Arabic] is with regard to the fact that it was once mountains [masculine in Arabic].

لَا تَرَىٰ فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

(20:107) ***You shall not see therein any crookedness or unevenness.***

It is said that *ʿiwaj* means what of the earth has sunk and that *amat* is that of it which has risen. The second person pronoun refers to the Prophet. What is intended is everyone who should see. It means no one will see it sunken like the valleys or risen like the hills or hillocks.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ ۖ وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

(20:108) ***On that day they shall follow the inviter, there is no crookedness in him, and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound.***

Negating the crookedness, if it is linked to following, such that, *no crookedness in him*, is a circumstantial qualifier, qualifying the plural pronoun the agent of which is "they shall follow" (*yattabiʾun*), would mean they would have no recourse if called but to follow without hesitation, aversion, impediment or indulgence because all that is derivative of ability and capability or Man's mistaken belief that he has for himself. Today they will see that ownership and power is God's without partner. He says: *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To God, the One, the Subduer (of all)* (40:16); *… that those who are unjust had seen, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly God's* (2:165).

If it is linked to an inviter, it means that the inviter does not leave

anyone uninvited, without overlooking anyone through inadvertence, forgetfulness or turning a blind eye in the invitation. However ending the sentence with, *and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent …* fits the first explanation because raising voices when invited and summoned is only to rebel and show disdain for obedience and following.

… and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound: Al-Rāghib says, a *hamas* is a secret sound. *Hamas* of feet means as quiet as their sound can be. He says, *so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound*.

The second person pronoun in you shall not hear refers to the Prophet. What is intended is anyone listening. It means voices will be lowered because of their engrossment in humbling and abasing themselves before God so anyone listening will only hear a low voice.

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

(20:109) ***On that day shall no intercession avail except of him whom the Beneficent allows and whose word He is pleased with.***

Negating intercession being of any benefit is an allusion to the fact that judging fairly and ruling decisively and in accordance with the divine promise and threat, will definitely happen that day without the transgression of any criminal being left out or the sin of any sinner being overlooked because of any impediment preventing it. Thus, the availing of intercession means its effectiveness.

His Words, *except of him whom the Beneficent allows and whose word He is pleased with* is the exception indicating that the intention behind the words is to deny intercessors, not the effect of intercession on those for whom intercession is made. The leave is for intercession as explained by what He says after that, *and whose word He is pleased with* because speaking on that day will revolve around His permission. He says: *On the day when it shall come, no soul shall speak except with His permission* (11:105)*; … they shall not speak except he whom the Beneficent permits and who speaks the right thing* (78:38).

The meaning of "permission to speak" was explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Hūd [in Ar. vol. 10 of this book]. "Whose word He is pleased with" is mentioned in an unconditional way. Thus, it means a word that is completely free of what angers God, whether that is an intentional or

unintentional error. That will only be from someone whose heart God has cleared of mistaken belief and misdeed and whose soul He has cleansed of the abomination of polytheism and ignorance in this world, or whom He has grouped with them, because trial and tribulation will be with the hearts (on) that day. As He says: *On the day when hidden things shall be made manifest* (86:9).

The discussion is a long one. Some of it you will encounter if God pleases.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

(20:110) ***He knows what is before them and what is behind them, while they do not comprehend it in knowledge.***

The plural pronouns in the verse could refer to "him whom the Beneficent allows" (20:109) because the object of reference is plural in terms of meaning. In that case, what is meant is that their pleasing words are not hidden from God, for His knowledge encompasses them while they do not encompass Him in knowledge. For, they cannot deceive Him with embellished speech which He is not pleased with.

The pronouns could also refer to the guilty. In that case, the verse is affirming His knowledge of them at the place of judgment—which is referred to as "before them"—as well as in this world and before they attend that place, both during their life and after that– which is referred to as "behind them". They are encompassed by His knowledge but they do not encompass Him in knowledge. Thus, He will punish them for what they have done, their faces having submitted to the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent and they will not be able to refuse His judgment. Thereupon will be their disappointment. This possibility fits the context of the verses better.

وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾

(20:111) ***And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent (God), and he who bears iniquity is indeed a failure.***

ʿAnwah means submissiveness before the domination of the Dominator. This will be the state of everything except God on the day of resurrection upon the manifestation of divine authority—as He says: *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To God, the One, the Subduer (of*

all) (40:16).

Thus, nothing owns anything in the true sense of the word which means absolute poverty and submissiveness. The humility is only attributed to faces because when it first appears, it manifests in faces. Concomitant to this humility is the fact that no impediment prevents His judgment and authority over them, and no obstacle gets between Him and what He decrees for them. The Living, the Self Subsisting is selected out of all His (beautiful) Names because the topic of discourse is the dead being brought to life a second time and causes cut off from them (on) that day. His Attributes which are appropriate in this situation are the absoluteness of His life and His direction of every affair.

… and he who bears iniquity is indeed a failure: And whoever does good works and he is a believer, he shall have no fear of injustice nor of the withholding of his due. This [clause] explains their punishment. "He who bears iniquity is indeed a failure" refers to sinners among unbelievers, as they are the ones who will have the failure of being meted out the worst punishment. It does not include all bearers of iniquity [that is, sinners] regardless of being believers or not because a believer will not be let down on that day due to intercession. If the verse is meant in a general sense—that anyone who bears any iniquity will be a failure—then failure in each case would be failure to achieve the happiness that is missed due to that specific iniquity, not failure to achieve happiness altogether.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾

(20:112) ***And whoever does good works and he is a believer, he shall have no fear of injustice nor of the withholding of his due.***

This is a digressionary explanation of the state of the pious believers to complete the list of categories and conclude the statement on the two groups—the pious and the sinners. Good works are qualified by belief because disbelief destroys good works as dictated by the verses on [such] destruction. *Haḍm* means deficiency. The meaning of the verse is clear. Through the conclusion of this verse the explanation in summary of what will happen to them on the day of requital when they are resurrected up until they are requited for their deeds, is completed. The verses mention the following points about their resurrection:

First: Their being summoned: *On the day when the trumpet shall be*

blown.

Second: Their being raised and the proximity of that, such that the fairest of them in course thinks that they have tarried but ten on the earth: *They shall consult together secretly …*

Third: The flattening of the earth to gather them upon it: *And they ask you about the mountains …*

Fourth: Their obedience and following the inviter to attend: *On that day they shall follow the inviter, there is no crookedness in him …*

Fifth: The ineffectiveness of intercession on cancelling the punishment: *On that day shall no intercession avail …*

Sixth: His knowledge of their state but not vice versa. It is a prelude to the reckoning and punishment/reward: *He knows what is before them and what is behind them …*

Seventh: His control over them, their humbling before Him and His judgment of them: *And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent …*

Eighth: The punishment: *and he … is indeed a failure.*

Thus the reason for the order of the verses is clear and for the reference to what is referred to in them.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾

(20:113) *And thus have We sent it down an Arabic Qur'an, and have distinctly set forth therein of threats that they may guard (against evil) or that it may produce a reminder for them.*

It is apparent from its context that the use of the demonstrative *kadhālika* (thus [literally: like that]) is due to the particulars of the explanation in the verses. *Qurʾānan ʿArabiyyan* (an Arabic Qur'an) is the circumstantial qualifier of the object of *anzalnāhu* (We sent it down). *Taṣrīf* means changing from state to state. It means: With this manner of inimitable explanation, We have sent down the Book, the situation being that it is a Qur'an recited in Arabic in which We have brought some of what We promised them in one form after another, *that they may guard (against evil) or that it may produce a reminder for them*. Earlier, minding (*dhikr*) was made an alternative to fearing, where He says: *haply he may mind or fear.* Based on that contradistinction, it can be deduced that here *ittiqāʾ* means

guarding against enmity and obstinacy due to fear of a possible harm, as opposed to a *taqwā* that is a result of faith and means performing acts of obedience and avoiding acts of disobedience. "Producing a reminder for them" means the realization of remembrance and awareness in them. With this interpretation [of *ittiqā'*] the contrast between remembering and guarding becomes clear without any contrivance or affectation.

The implied meaning is, and God knows best: "Haply they may refrain from enmity against the truth due to a fear in their hearts that what is being said could possibly be true, or haply it may produce a reminder of the truth that they would believe in".

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۗ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ ۖ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

(20:114) ***Supremely exalted is therefore God, the King, the Truth, and do not make haste with the Quran before its revelation is made complete to you and say: O my Lord ! increase me in knowledge.***

Absolving Him and declaring Him to be free of anything inappropriate. It can be made consequential to the Qur'an's revelation and the elaboration of threats in it to guide the people. Its being consequential to that and what precedes it—talk of resurrection and punishment is more appropriate in view of their all merging into a single thread, namely that He is a King disposing within His Kingdom by guiding people to what is for their own good, then summoning them and rewarding or punishing them for the good or evil they have done.

Thus, supremely exalted is God, Who absolutely owns everything with no impediment to His disposal and no repeller of His decree. He sends Messengers and reveals the Books to guide people that is, the affairs of His Kingdom. He then resurrects them after their death, summons them, then requites them for what they have done, their having humbled themselves before the Ever-Living, Self-Subsistent. This is also one of the affairs of His rule, for He is the King in the beginning and the end. He is the Truth, established on what He has been, and unchanging from how He is.

This glorification could also be consequential to everything above, including the story of Moses and what was mentioned after it up to this point. It would be as an ending to it by praising and proclaiming God to be Mighty.

… and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you and say, O my Lord ! Increase me in knowledge: The context testifies that these words refer to the Prophet's receipt of the revelation of the Qur'an. The pronoun in "its revelation" refers to the Qur'an. *And do not make haste with the Qur'an* is a prohibition on hastening with recitation of it. *Before its revelation is made complete to you* means before revelation of it is completed by the Angel of revelation. It means that the Prophet, when revelation of the Qur'an came to him, used to hurry in the recitation of what was revealed to him before the revelation was completed. He was then told not to hurry the recitation of it before it was complete and had come to an end. The verse means the same as what is said elsewhere: *Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it, Surely on Us (devolves) the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore when We have recited it, follow its recitation* (75:16-18).

This explanation is supported by what He says next, *and say: O my Lord! increase me in knowledge* because the order of "do not make haste with it" and "say: O my Lord! increase me" suggest a substitution—instead of hurrying the recitation of what had not yet been revealed, ask for an increase in knowledge. The meaning reduces to: "You hurry recitation of what has not yet been revealed because you have vague knowledge of it. However, do not content yourself with that—patiently ask for fresh knowledge from God and listen to the rest of the revelation".

This verse is part of what supports oral traditions that say that the Qur'an was revealed altogether and not revealed in portions to the Prophet. If he did not know the Qur'an he had prior to that, it would make no sense his hurrying recitation of what had not yet been revealed.

Claims:

(i) The verse means: Do not hurry in reciting the Qur'an to your Companions and dictating it to them before the meanings of it are explained to you.

The reader knows better that the verse has nothing to do with this meaning.

(ii) It means: Do not ask for [more] revelation of the Qur'an before God finishes His [current] revelation of it to you.

Like the previous [explanation] it does not fit the wording of the verse.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about (the words), *when the fairest of them in course would say*: [It means] "the most learned and most pious of them would say you tarried but a day".

(2) It is said in *Majmaʿ [al-Bayān]* that a man from Thaqīf (tribe) asked the Prophet: How will the mountains be—in spite of their mightiness—on the day of resurrection? He replied: "Surely God will drive them such that He makes them like sand. He will then send the winds upon them breaking them up".

Author's comment: This explanation is narrated in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* on the authority of Ibn al-Mundhir on the authority of Ibn Jurayh as follows: O, Muhammad, what will your Lord do to these mountains on the day of resurrection? Thereafter it was revealed: *And they ask you about the mountains …*

(3) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about His Words: "You shall not see therein *ʿiwajan* or *amtan*". He said: *Amt* means elevation and *ʿiwaj* means rugged and bare.

(4) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about His Words: *On that day they shall follow the inviter, there is no crookedness in him*: "An inviter from God, Mighty and Sublime is He".

(5) al-Bāqir said: When it is the day of resurrection, God will gather the people barefoot and naked on one side and will stop them in the land where they are raised and gathered until they sweat profusely and their breathing is heavy. They will then tarry thus for fifty years. It is [what is meant by] God's Words, *and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound …*[1]

(6) Aḥmad ibn Idrīs said: Abu Qurrah the hadith collector (*muḥaddith*) asked me to get him an audience with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā so I sought leave for that and he granted me leave. He then went to see him and asked him about the lawful, unlawful and laws until his queries reached monotheism. Abu Qurrah then said: Surely, we have narrated that God divided dreams and seeing among the Prophets—he apportioned being spoken to, to

1 *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī on the authority of al-Ḥasan ibn Mahbub on the authority of Abu Muhammad al-Wabishi on the authority of Abu al-Ward.

Moses and seeing to, Muhammad. Abū al-Ḥasan then asked: So who communicated from God to the *thaqalayn*—the jinn and humans?

(7) Was it not Muhammad? He said: Yes. He asked: How can a man come to the whole of creation, tell them that he has come from God's presence, that He is calling them to God by God's command and saying:
(6:103) *Vision comprehends Him not*;
(20:110) *while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* and
(42:11) *nothing like a likeness of Him* and then say: I have seen Him with my own eyes and comprehended Him in knowledge, and He is in the form of a human? Are you not ashamed? The atheists (*zanadiqah*) have not been able to accuse him of this—his bringing something from God's presence, then bringing the opposite from another side … God said: *while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge,* so if eyes see Him, one has comprehended Him in knowledge and cognizance has occurred.

(8) Abu Qurrah then said: So do you reject the oral traditions? Abū al-Ḥasan replied: If the oral traditions contradict the Qur'an, I reject them. What Muslims are agreed on is that He is not comprehended in knowledge and eyes do not perceive Him and nothing like a likeness of Him.[1]

(9) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about His Words: *and do not make haste with the Qur'an*: When the Qur'an was revealed to God's Messenger , He would hasten to recite it before the revelation of the verse was completed. It means: Thereafter God revealed, *and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you,* that is, finish reciting it, and say, *O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge.*

Author's comment: This explanation is narrated on the authority of al-Saddī[2] with the only exception that it says that he used to do that out of fear of forgetting. The reader knows that forgetting revelation is incompatible with the infallibility of Prophethood.

(10) al-Ḥasan said: A man slapped his wife and so she came to the

1 *al-Kāfī* on the authority of ʿAbd al-Jabbār on the authority of Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā.

2 *al-Durr al-Manthūr* on the authority of Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

Prophet to ask for retribution (*qisās*). Thereafter, the Prophet set up a tribunal for retribution between them. God then revealed: *and do not make haste with the Qur'an before its revelation is made complete to you and say: O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge.* The Prophet then hesitated until: *Men are the maintainers of women* … was revealed.[1]

Author's comment: The hadith is not free of problems because neither the first verse and its implied message nor the second verse matches what is said in the hadith. Both verses were discussed above.

(11) *Majmaᶜ [al-Bayān]* says: ᶜĀʾishah narrated on the authority of the Prophet: When I come to a day when I do not increase in [my] knowledge which brings me closer to God, may God not bless me at its sunrise.

Author's comment: The hadith is not free of problems. How the Prophet could be suspected of supplicating against himself with regard to a matter which is not up to him. There may be corruption in the hadith with regard to narration of the meaning.

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1 *al-Durr al-Manthūr* cited by al-Faryābī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh.

Verses 115-126

These verses narrate the story of Adam and his wife's entering the Garden and leaving it through insinuation by the Satan and God's decision thereupon to legislate the religion; happiness for whoever follows guidance and wretchedness for whoever turns away from His remembrance.

The story appears in this chapter in the briefest wording and [with] the most beautiful expressions. The main intention in it—as testified to by its conclusion—is linked to explaining what He has decreed—legislating the religion, requital, reward and punishment. It is also supported by the deduction made after it: *And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communications of his Lord …*

True—insofar as it refers to Adam's repentance—the story is somewhat linked to, *And most surely I am most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction*. The story, as is clear from its context in this chapter and wherever else it is referred to for example, al-Baqarah (The Cow) and al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places), depicts Man's state in accordance with his corporeal and material nature. God created him with the best makeup, immersed him in His innumerable blessings and made him dwell in the Garden of temperance. He prohibited him from transgressing by going to the side of extravagance due to following his desires and attachment to the mirage of this world. He warned him against forgetting the side of the Lord by forsaking his covenant to Him, disobeying Him, and following the insinuations of Satan who decorates this world in his eyes. By doing so, Satan makes it appear to his imagination that if he clings to this world and forgets his Lord he will thereby acquire power over natural causes and will be able to employ them in order to acquire all of the pleasures that he desires, which will eternally remain for him and he will eternally remain for them. It is thus that one clings to this world and forgets the status of his Lord. As a result, the evils of life will eventually appear to him and the grim face of wretchedness will become manifest to him. Calamities befall him, time betrays him, the means will let him down and Satan will turn away from him. As a result, he begins to cover himself with visible blessings and tries to make up for the loss of one blessing with another present one. He

escapes from one punishment to a more excruciating one, and ventures to treat a pain with a more severe one, until he is finally ordered to go out of the Garden of bliss and honor to the pitfall of wretchedness and failure. This is what appeared to Adam when God put him in the Garden and bestowed honor upon him, until his case ended up where it did. However, his events occurred before the legislation of any religion to begin with, and his Garden was an intermediary (*barzakhiyyah*) Garden represented in an otherworldly life. Thus the proscription was an advisory one (*irshādī*) not an authoritative one (*mawlawī*). Hence, the consequence of his disobedience was an inevitable and natural outcome of what he did, not to legislative punishment meted out due to disobedience, as we discussed in detail in the exposition of chapters 2 (al-Baqarah) and 7 (al-Aʾrāf).

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾

(20:115) ***And certainly We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination.***

[The word] ʿ*ahd* means advice. It is used in this sense for edicts and constitutions. *Nisyān,* forgetting, is well known but it may be used metonymically for not doing [something] because it is concomitant to it—when something is forgotten it is not done. ʿ*Azm* means firm resolve to do something. He says: … *so when you have decided* (ʿazamta)*, then place your trust in God* (3:159).

It may also be used to mean forbearance, perhaps because forbearance is something difficult for souls and thus it requires a stronger and more resolute determination. ʿ*Azm* as forbearance is an example of referring to something [that is, forbearance] by the name of one of its implications [that is, determination]. He says: … *these most surely are actions due to courage* (la min ʿazm al-umūr) (42:43).

It means: "I swear, We advised Adam before but he forsook the advice and We did not find in him any firm resolve to keep it or [to have] forbearance for it". The aforementioned ʿ*ahd* as is apparent from his story in various places in the Qur'an was the prohibition from eating from the tree, for example: … *but do not go near this tree* (7:19).

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ ﴿١١٦﴾ فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰ ﴿١١٧﴾

(20:116-117) ***And when We said to the Angels: Make obeisance to Adam, they made obeisance, but Iblīs (did it not); he refused. So We said: O Adam! This is an enemy to you and to your wife; therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be unhappy;***

This is joined with a conjunction to an implied phrase: "Remember Our covenant to him [Adam] and remember a time when We commanded the Angels to make obeisance to him, who made obeisance except for Iblīs. Make mention of this so that it may become clear that he forgot and resolved not to keep to Our command". His Word, *abā* (refused) is the answer to an implied question, namely: What did Iblīs do? Came the answer: He refused. His Words, *So We said: O Adam! This is an enemy to you and to your wife; therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden so that you should be unhappy* follow on consequentially from Iblīs' refusal to make obeisance that is, when he refused, We said by way of directing Adam to what was best for him and by way of advice: This one who refused to make obeisance—Iblīs—is an enemy to you and your wife…

… therefore let him not drive you both forth from the Garden: Directing the instruction to Iblīs—not to drive them both forth from the Garden—at Adam, is metonymy for an instruction for him not to obey Iblīs or be inadvertent to his trickery and underestimate his scheming that is, do not obey him or be inadvertent to his trickery and insinuation such that he gains mastery over you and has the power to drive you both forth from the Garden and make you both unhappy.

In his exegesis, Imam al-Rāzī cites a number of explanations for the reason why Iblīs was an enemy to Adam and his wife. They are ridiculous reasons, and going to the length of citing them is of no benefit. The truth is that the reason for his [Iblīs] expulsion from the favored position, his being damned and cursed to the day of resurrection as is clear from His Words—may God curse him—is as cited by God in: *He said: My Lord! Because Thou hast made life evil to me, I will certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to deviate* (15:39) and *He said: Tell me, is this he whom Thou hast honored above me? If Thou shouldst respite me to the day of resurrection, I will most certainly cause his progeny to perish except a few* (17:62).

Obviously, honoring Adam over Satan means honoring the human

species over him, just as ordering him to make obeisance to Adam means ordering him to make obeisance to the human species. Hence, the main reason [for Satan's enmity] was giving precedence and superiority to mankind over him, followed by his expulsion and curse.

His Word *fatashqā* is a consequence of their [Adam and Eve's] expulsion from the Garden. *Shaqāʾ* means drudgery that is, you will be tired if you leave the Garden and live a worldly life elsewhere—the earth—confronting needs and your striving to fulfil them, for example, the need for food, drink, clothing, shelter etc. Proof that *shaqāʾ* means drudgery is in the two subsequent verses which is indicated in its exegesis: *And that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun*. It is also proof that the prohibition was advisory—disobedience of which would result in no more than falling into the harm consequential to the deed itself that is, the drudgery of striving to fulfil life's needs and acquire what is necessary to live—and not authoritative, the very disobedience of which would have been harm into which the servant fell, consequential to which would be punishment in the Hereafter.

Furthermore, the readers know that the covenant was before the legislation of the foundation of religion which [only] happened upon the command to leave the Garden and descend to the earth. As for the use of the singular in *tashqā* (you should be unhappy) and not saying *tashqiyā* in the dual form, it is because the covenant only came down upon Adam and the words were addressed to him. That is why the singular was used with regard to everything referring to it, for example:

- *but **he** forgot; and We did not find in **him** any determination.*
- *so that **you** should be unhappy.*
- *that **you** shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing.*
- *And that **you** shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun.*
- *But the Shaytan made an evil suggestion to **him***
- *and **Adam** disobeyed*
- *Then his Lord chose **him**, so He turned to **him***

True, the dual is used where it is unavoidable as in:

- *an enemy to you and your wife; therefore let him not drive you **both** forth*
- *Then they **both** ate of it, so **their** evil inclinations became manifest to **them***

*- so **they** began to cover themselves*
*- Get forth **you two** therefrom, all (of you), one of you (is) enemy to another*

The reader should reflect on this.

It is claimed that the singular is used for *tashqā* (you should be unhappy) because a Man has a duty to maintain a Woman. That is why *shaqāʾ* that is, drudgery in earning a living is attributed to Adam. The problem is that the two subsequent verses do not fit that. If it was as claimed, it would have said: "Surely it is (ordained) for you [dual] that you shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing and that you [dual] shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you [dual] feel the heat of the sun".

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَضْحَىٰ ﴿١١٩﴾

(20:118-119) ***Surely it is (ordained) for you that you shall not be hungry therein nor bare of clothing; And that you shall not be thirsty therein nor shall you feel the heat of the sun.***

One says *ḍaḥā, yaḍḥā*—like *saʿā*; *yasʿā—daḥawā*, *daḥyā* when the sun hits one or shines for one as if what is meant by the lack of *ḍaḥw* is that there is no effect from the heat of the sun such that there is any need to take shelter in any abode as protection from heat and cold. The four things are put in order in the style of sequential folding and evolution (*laff wa nashr*) to observe the pauses. The basis of the sequence is that, you shall not be hungry, thirsty, bare or feel the heat of the sun.

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَا يَبْلَىٰ ﴿١٢٠﴾

(20:120) ***But the Satan* (al-Shaytan)** ***made an evil suggestion to him; he said: O Adam! Shall I guide you to the tree of immortality and a kingdom which decays not* (lā yablā)*?***

Al-Shaytan means the evil one—Iblīs' nickname because of his being evil. *The tree of immortality* means the forbidden tree. *Al-bilā* means a thing's becoming old—the opposite of new. *The tree of immortality* means a tree, the fruit of which gives everlasting life. *A kingdom which decays not* means a rulership which is not affected by the passage of time and friction from competitors and impediments. It ultimately means something

like what we say—"Shall I guide you to a tree (such that) eating the fruit from it, you will be bestowed with everlasting life and an eternal kingdom". Thus, *lā yablā* is not repetition to achieve emphasis as has been claimed. The proof of what is said here is in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places) with regard to this theme: *Your Lord has not forbidden you this tree except that you may not both become two Angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals* (7:20).

There is no contradiction between combining eternal life and eternal kingdom here [20:120] with the conjunction *wāw* (and) and presenting them as alternatives (*al-tardīd*) in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places) because it is possible that the presentation as alternatives there is to negate "neither" (*manʾ al-khuluww*) but not to negate "both" (*manʾ al-jamʾ*). The combination here is with regard to its having both attributes and the presentation as alternatives there [7:20] is with regard to the *mutaʿalliq* (dependent object) of the *nahy* (prohibition) as if to say: "Surely there are two attributes in this tree. Your Lord has only prohibited you from it because of one or the other or surely your Lord prohibited you from it so that you would not abide forever in the Garden with an eternal kingdom, or you should not be eternal based on eternal kingdom—meaning everlasting life". This is something the reader should understand. Whatever the case may be, there is no contradiction between the presentation as alternatives in one verse and combining the two in another.

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ

(20:121) ***Then they both ate of it, so their evil inclinations became manifest to them, and they both began to cover themselves with leaves of the Garden …***

Exegesis of this appeared in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf (The Elevated Places).

وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ﴿١٢١﴾

(20:121) ***… and Adam disobeyed his Lord, so he erred.***

Al-Ghayy (lit. error, going astray) is the opposite of *al-rushd* which means hitting on the truth, not error which is straying off the path. *Hudā* (guidance) is the opposite of both of them—it means guidance if it is

made the opposite of error, for example, in the subsequent verse, and, showing the way or taking [someone] to the destination by setting someone on the way if it is the opposite of *ḍalāl* (straying) so it is not satisfactory to explain *ghayy* in this verse as *ḍalāl* (straying).

Adam's disobedience of his Lord, as referred to above, and previously explained, just means his disobeying an advisory instruction and not an authoritative one. The Prophets are protected from disobedience and transgression with regard to a matter attributable to the religion which is revealed to them, with respect to their receiving it—so they do not sin—and with respect to their preserving it—so they do not forget or corrupt—and, with respect to their passing and communicating it to the people, in word—their speaking nothing but the truth which is revealed to them—and deed—their actions not contradicting their words. They do not accrue any minor or major sin because there is communication through action just as through word. As for disobedience in the sense of disobeying an advisory instruction motivated by nothing but achieving that which is instructed as one of life's good or benefits by choosing the best way—like a sincere counselor who commands and prohibits by way of advice—obedience or disobedience thereof has nothing to do with the proofs for infallibility, as is clear.

This may be what is meant by someone who says that in spite of their infallibility, it is possible for the Prophets not to do what is best (*tark al-awlā*), for example, Adam's eating from the tree. The verse is one of the battlegrounds of [different] opinions. Exegeses differ according to their different schools of thought on the infallibility of the Prophets, each of [the exegetes] feathering his own nest.

ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ ﴿١٢٢﴾

(20:122) ***Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided (him).***

Ijtibāʾ as stated many times above means collecting in the way of selection. Part of it is His collecting His servant for Himself, not sharing him with anyone and making him one of the *mukhlaṣīn* (the most sincere). Based on this explanation, the clause, *so He turned to him and guided (him)* follows on consequentially. It is as if he was made up of different, separate parts and He collected them together from here and there into one place

then turned to him, guided him and made him advance toward Himself. Here we interpreted *hadā* ("guided him") as "guided him to Himself" even though the term is unqualified. We did so because of the context provided by the clause, "chose him". This does not contradict unqualified guidance because being guided to Him is the root and origin of all guidance. True, guidance has to be restricted to what pertains to the religion—true belief and good deeds. Its proof is guidance in the verse being made consequential to choosing. This is something the reader should ponder upon.

Thus, what we have presented (as explanation) cannot be objected to by saying that the apparent [effect] of this guidance appearing after reference to that *ghiwāyah* (not getting it right) is that, that *ghiwāyah* is not connected to it. Because the *ghiwāyah* pertained to an advisory instruction, the verse means his being given infallibility in instances both of authoritative and advisory instructions and his being protected from error both in religious and secular matters. The reason why this objection cannot be made is because guidance has been made consequential to being chosen, which apparently means that he was guided to that for which he was chosen. The choosing is only linked to religious happiness that is, restricted to servitude to God.

Thus the guidance is also linked to that, that is, guidance without any intermediary between Him and the servant receiving guidance without any lag. As He says: … *yet surely God does not guide him who leads astray* (16:37).

Guidance is also to life's benefits even though they are also attributable to Him. However they are of those things in which causes come between them and Him and causes may fail. This is something the reader should consider.

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي
هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٣﴾

(20:123) ***He said: Get forth you two therefrom, all (of you), one of you (is) enemy to another. So there will surely come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy***

This is similar to what was explained (by way of exegesis) in Sūrah al-Baqarah [The Cow] and Sūrah al-Aʾrāf [The Elevated Places].

There is in the clause, *He said: Get forth you two*, a grammatical shift for rhetorical purpose from the second person to the third person singular. The reason for it may be because the verse contains judgment and sentence which are exclusive to Him. He says: *And God judges with the truth* (40:20) … and … *judgment is only God*'s … (12:67).

So there will surely come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy: There is in the verse a judgment from Him consequential to the fall. That is why it is joined with the *fā*ʾ (so) denoting consequentiality. *Fa immā* is originally *fa in*, where an extra *aā* is added for emphasis. Then this is further emphasized by letter *nūn* in *yaʾtiyannakum*. These two emphases indicate the occurrence of the condition, as if to say: If guidance comes to you from Me—and it inevitably comes—whoever follows guidance…

Ascribing "following" to "guidance" in the clause, *then whoever follows My guidance* is a metaphorical expression in the form of metonymy. The basis of it is: Whoever follows the guide who guides by My guidance.

His Words, *he shall not go astray or be unhappy* mean he will not stray on his path and will not be unhappy at his destination which is the outcome of his affair. The lack of any qualification to *ḍalāl* (straying) and *shaqā*ʾ (unhappiness) dictates negation of straying and unhappiness from him, both in this world and the Hereafter. This is indeed the case, for surely God's guidance is what He has called to through the tongues of His Prophets and which conforms to the innate human nature (*fiṭra*). It consists of a set of beliefs and deeds which Man's instinct and disposition call him to in accordance with the systems put at his disposal. Obviously everything's happiness is what its disposition dictates along with what it has been equipped with. There is no happiness beyond that. He says: *Then set your face upright for religion in the right state—the nature* (fiṭra) *made by God in which He has made men; there is no altering of God's creation; that is the right religion* (30:30).

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِى فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ ﴿١٢٤﴾

(20:124) ***And whoever turns away from My reminder, his shall be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind.***

Al-Rāghib says:

> *al-ʿish* means life exclusive to animals. It is more particular than *ḥayāt* because *ḥayāt* is said about animals, the Creator and the Angels. *Maʿīshah* is derived from it because a living is made from it (*limā yutaʿayyashu minhu*). He says: *We distribute among them their livelihood* (maʿīshatahum) *in the life of this world* and *a straitened life* (maʿīshatan ḍankan) (43:32).

Ḍank means straits of everything. The masculine and feminine are both the same. One says *makan ḍank* (a narrow place [masculine]) and *maʿishah ḍank* (a straitened life [feminine]). Etymologically it is a gerund (*maṣdar*) from *yadunk* of the same pattern as *sharafa*, *yashrufu* and it means, to be straitened.

"And whoever turns away from My reminder" contrasts "then whoever follows My guidance" in the previous verse. The contrast should have naturally said: "And whoever does not follow My guidance". The only reason He departs from that, instead referring to "turning away from the reminder", is to show thereby the reason for the ruling, because forgetting Him and turning away from His reminder is the reason for a wretched life and blindness on the day of resurrection. It is a prelude and introduction to what is mentioned below: His negligence, on the day of resurrection, of those who neglected Him in this world.

"Reminder" here could be an infinitive, where "His reminder" would mean the act of remembering God, which is a case of ascription of an infinitive to the object of the verb. It could also mean the Qur'an or all divine books, as supported by His subsequent statement, *Our communications came to you but you neglected them*. It could also refer to the call of the truth, which is called a reminder (*dhikr*) because the remembrance of God is a necessary consequence and implication of it.

His Words, *his shall be a straitened life*, means wretched (*ḍayyiqah*) life. That is because nothing will remain for whoever forgets his Lord and stops remembering Him apart from clinging to the world and making it his only pursuit which he strives for. He will care about fixing, increasing and gaining enjoyment from his livelihood. The livelihood he has been given will not suffice him, no matter whether it is a little or a lot, because he is never satisfied with whatever he achieves and acquires, but constantly hankers for more, without any limit. He will always have straitness of heart and be exasperated by what he finds, his heart attached to what is

beyond it along with the worry, grief, sorrow, distress, anxiety and fear which assails him upon the descent of calamities and accidents such as death, illness, malady, the envy of the envious, the scheming of schemers, striving resulting in disappointment and loss of loved ones. If only he knew the status of his Lord and remembered Him without negligence, then he would be certain that he has a life with his Lord that is unadulterated by death, a dominion that is not afflicted by evanescence, a power that is unsullied by humiliation, and a happiness, joy, honor and dignity that have no end. He would realize that this world is an ephemeral abode and its life is naught but a trivial enjoyment compared to the Hereafter. If he realized that, his soul would be satisfied by what of the world has been assigned to him. His livelihood would suffice him without narrowness or straitness.

It has been claimed that "straitened life" means the punishment of the grave and the wretchedness of life in the *barzakh* (purgatory) based on the fact that many who turn away from the remembrance of God attain the most abundant livelihoods, and the affairs of this world are completely docile under their command. They live rich and happy lives in this world.

The problem with that is that it is based on comparing a rich way of life with a poor way of life with regard to the ways of life themselves and their means. However, the Qur'an does not assess wealth and poverty in and of themselves, but it views them in light of a believer's way of life who is armed with God's remembrance and belief in Him, versus an unbeliever's way of life who is forgetful of his Lord, whose soul is attached to life in the worldly life, and who is far away from faith. There is no doubt that a believer has a free, happy life; He is content with the livelihood that his Lord has bestowed upon him, even if it is the bare necessity or less than that. The one who turns away from remembrance of his Lord will have nothing but discontent with what he finds and attachment to what is beyond that.

True, punishment of the grave is an example of a straitened life based on "his shall be a straightened life" being addressed to explaining their state in this world and His Words, *and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind* to explain their state in the Hereafter, the *barzakh* (purgatory life) being on the tails of the world.

It has been claimed that a straitened life means the straitness of hell's punishment on the day of resurrection and, *We will raise him …* [means]

what precedes entering hell.

The problem with this explanation is that the lack of any qualification in the clause, *his shall be a straitened life* followed by the qualification of the words, *and We will raise him to the day of resurrection* does not fit it as is obvious.

True, if the beginning of the verse is treated as unqualified—thus applicable to the way of life both in this world and the Hereafter—and the end of it as restricted to the Hereafter, there is validity for it.

His Words, *and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind* mean such that he is not guided to where his happiness would be, that is, Paradise. Proof of that is what is coming up in the two subsequent verses.

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَىٰ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

(20:125) *He shall say: My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind and I was a seeing one indeed?*

It springs to mind that blindness on the day of resurrection is linked to the sense of sight because what he asks about is the loss of his sight which he had in the world that is, his sense of sight as opposed to vision of the heart that is, *baṣīrah*. There is an apparent contradiction between what is said here and some other verse that talk about the guilty seeing the horrors of the day and the signs of grandeur and subjugation as in: *And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord: Our Lord! we have seen and we have heard* (32:12) and *Read your book …* (17:14).

That is why some of them say that they will first be raised seeing then they will go blind. Some of them will be raised seeing, then blind, then seeing [again]. This is based on comparing the affairs in the Hereafter with the affairs in this world, which is an analogy between two dissimilar things. It is evident and agreed upon based on the Qur'an and Sunnah that the system governing in the Hereafter is not the same as the system that governs the world and which we are accustomed to in the realm of nature. In this world the seeing can see everything visible while the blind cannot see anything that can be seen. There is no evidence that it applies also to the system in the Hereafter. It is possible for the matter to be separable there—the guilty being unable to see where happiness, success and victory through honour in their life would be, but able to see what completes

the case against him, the terrors of the resurrection which terrify him and that by which the punishment becomes more severe—Hellfire and so on. He says: *Nay! most surely they shall on that day be debarred from their Lord* (83:15).

قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا ۖ وَكَذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسَىٰ ﴿١٢٦﴾

(20:126) *He will say: Even so, Our communications came to you but you neglected them; even thus shall you be forsaken this day.*

[This is] the answer to the person's question: My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind and I was a seeing one indeed? The demonstrative *kadhālika* [literally: like that, even so] in *kadhālika atātka* ("Even so, Our communications came to you") refers to his being raised blind as referred to in the question, and, in *kadhālika al-yawm,* thus this day, to the meaning of, *Our communications came to you but you neglected them*. It means: "He will say, Just as We raised you blind, Our communications came to you but you neglected them. Just as Our communications came to you and you neglected them, We will forsake you this day. That is, your are raised blind on this day of resurrection and you are left on your own without being able to see, just as something neglected is left on its own. This is like your negligence of Our communications in the world. Your failure to be guided by Our communications in the world is like Our forsaking you today and not guiding you by not making you seeing so that you would find your way to salvation. In other words, We are requiting you on this day just as you acted in the world". As He says: *And the recompense of evil is punishment like it* (42:40).

God calls the guilty's disobedience as forgetting (*nisyān*) His communications—their having turned away from remembrance of Him and forsaking His guidance—and their being punished with blindness on the day of resurrection and His forsaking (*nisyān*) them. The end of what He says is turned back to the beginning—Adam's disobedience which He called forgetting His covenant, saying, *And certainly We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot…* It is as if the story of Adam's Garden along with all its particulars was an earlier parable representing what would happen to his children after him right up to the day of resurrection. Thus His prohibition of approaching the tree resembles the religious call and the divine guidance that would come later on, and Adam's disobedience—that

is, his negligence (*nisyān*) of the covenant—resembles his offspring's acts of disobedience which are negligence of His remembrance and His reminding communications. The only difference with Adam's test is that it was before any laws of Shariah were legislated. Thus the prohibition addressed to him was of advisory nature. His disobedience was a case of not doing what is preferred, unlike the disobedience of his descendants.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Tafsīr,* al-Qummī says about His Words, *And certainly We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination*: It is an example of what He forbade him from, was eating from the tree.

(2) *Tafsīr,* al-ʿAyyāshī on the authority of Jamīl ibn Darrāj on the authority of one of our companions on the authority of one of the two of them: I asked him: How did God penalize Adam for forgetting. He said: He did not forget. How could he have forgotten when Iblīs said to him: *Your Lord has not forbidden you this tree except that you may not both become two Angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals* (7:20).

Author's comment: This is the opinion of someone who says of the verse that forgetting is meant literally—that Adam literally forgot the prohibition when he ate and did not have any determination at all to disobey. He refuted that by saying that it contradicts the Book. Thus the weakness becomes apparent of what is narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir: God, Blessed and Almighty is He, commanded Adam not to approach this tree. When the time within God's knowledge came for him to eat from it, he forgot [his covenant] and thus ate from it. That is what God's words mean: *And certainly We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination.*[1] This opinion is attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās. [The original follows]

(3) It is narrated on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās: I asked ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb about God's words: *O you who believe! do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you* … He said: There was a problem with the lineage of some men from among the Muhajirin and so they said one day: We swear

1 *Rawḍat Al-Kāfī* on the authority of Abū Ḥamzah.

by God, we would like God to reveal some Qur'an about our lineage. Thereafter, God revealed what you have recited. He then said to me: Surely this companion of yours that is, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, if he were in charge he would be ascetic. However I fear conceit for himself would carry him away. I said: O, commander of the faithful, surely our companion is, by God, he about whom we say that he is one of a kind, there is no substitute for him and that he never angered God's Messenger all the days he kept him company. He said: Not even with regard to Abū Jahl's daughter when he wanted to get engaged to her on top of Fāṭimah? I said: God said with regard to Adam's act of disobedience: *and We did not find in him any determination*. Our companion did not intentionally anger God's Messenger. However, the notions which no one is able to keep away from himself, be as he may one who understands God's religion, knows God's commandment. If his attention were to be drawn to it, he would resile and turn in repentance. He then said: O, Ibn ʿAbbās, whoever thinks that he can push back the seas and plunges into them with you until he reaches the depth of them is mistaken.[1]

Author's comment: He bases his proof on *ʿazm* meaning intention to disobey. Concomitant to this is forgetting being meant literally. Thus Adam did not remember the commandment when he ate but he did not have a firm intention to disobey so he did disobey his Lord. However, as indicated above, it contradicts: *Your Lord has not forbidden you this tree except that you may not both become two Angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals* (7:20).

Furthermore, the explanation given for the verse does not fit the context provided by the verses preceding or following it. It is worth mentioning that Ibn ʿAbbās is above this statement being attributed to him, his being who he is.

As for what the hadith says about God's Messenger being angry with ʿAlī for his wanting to get engaged to Abū Jahl's daughter on top of Fāṭimah, it is an allusion to what Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim say via several chains of narration on the authority of al-Miswar ibn Makhramah. The wording of one of them is that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib sought Abū Jahl's daughter's hand when Fāṭimah the daughter of God's

1 *al-Durr al-manthūr* on the authority of al-Zubayr ibn Bakkār in [*Al-akhbār*] *al-Muwaffaqiyyāt.*

Messenger was still with him. When Fāṭimah heard about that, she came to the Prophet and said to him: Your people are talking about you [saying] that you do get angry for your daughters. This, ʿAlī is going to marry Abū Jahl's daughter. Al-Miswar said: The Prophet then stood up and I heard him when he uttered the declarations of faith (tashahhada) then said: Now to our topic, surely I married off al-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rubayʾ and he spoke to me and told me the truth. Surely, Fāṭimah is a part of me and I only hate them to test her. Verily, by God, God's Messenger's and God's enemy's daughter cannot ever both be married to the same man. He said: Thereafter, ʿAlī abandoned his proposal.

Careful scrutiny of what the hadith says makes one think ill of him because there is in it explicit defamation of the Prophet. If what it says is true, the anger on his part was a pre-Islamic (*jāhiliyyah*) inclination without anything to legitimize it. What was he angry with—with His Words, … *then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four* … (4:3) which is general, was not abrogated or particularized by any other verse particular to it? Was it some Sunnah which made Fāṭimah an exception to the verse and legislated a special rule of prohibition exclusive to her which had not hitherto been established or communicated prior to that? There is in the wording of the hadith an indication of that. Alternatively, this statement itself was an explanation and communication so it was not explained or communicated prior to that. There is no harm in breaking a rule before it is communicated and there is no disobedience in so doing. So what was the meaning of his becoming angry with someone who had not performed any act of disobedience or resolved to do so? He is innocent of these pre-Islamic dispositions. It is as if some of the narrators of hadith wanted to defame ʿAlī and [ended up] defaming the Prophet without realizing it.

Furthermore, it contradicts indubitable narrations which indicate ʿAlī's innocence of any disobedience, for example, *Khabar al-Thaqalayn* (Narration of The Two Weighty Things), *Khabar al-Manzilah* (The Narration on Status) *Khabar ʿAlī maʿa al-Ḥaqq* (The Narration: ʿAlī is with the truth) etc.

(4) al-Bāqir said regarding God's Words, *And certainly We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination*: "He covenanted him regarding Muhammad and the Imams from his offspring but he forsook [it] and his mind was not made up about them that it was thus.

> They were only called *ulī al-ʿazm* because a covenant was made to them regarding Muhammad, the Executors after him and the Mahdī and his life. They were all resolved that it was all thus, confessing it".[1]

Author's comment: The narration is an abridged version of a detailed hadith narrated on the authority of al-Bāqir mentioning Mankind's creation followed by people's being made witness to themselves in the world of particles and a covenant being taken from Adam and the Messengers firm in determination to [God's] being Lord, Prophethood, guardianship (*wilāyah*), those firm in determination confessing to it and Adam's hesitation and his mind not being made up to testify even though he did not reject. His Words: *And certainly We made a covenant with Adam …* are then applied to it.[2]

The meaning referred to in the narration is an example of esoteric [interpretation of the] Qur'an (*baṭn al-Qur'an*) in which rules are referred back to their essence and covenants to their true meaning (*taʾwīl*)—divine guardianship. It is not exegesis of the wording of the verse at all. Proof that it is not exegesis is that the verses—twelve verses—all tell the same story. If the first verse is construed as such by way of exegesis, there is nothing left in the verses to indicate a prohibition on eating from the tree which is the cornerstone of the story upon which the remainder rests. Therefore, the clause, *let him not drive you both forth from the Garden* cannot subsist without it, as is obvious. The prohibition was not referred to in any chapter revealed before this chapter such that it can be referred to. Both chapters al-Aʾrāf and al-Baqarah in which the aforementioned prohibition was referred to, were revealed after this chapter, as will be alluded to if God pleases.

In short, it is esoteric interpretation and not exegesis even though it appears in some of the narrations in the form of exegesis, for example, Jabir's aforementioned narration. It may be [an instance] of what some of the hadith narrators became confused about and so they presented it in this form. It reached the point in some of the narrations that the Imam's words were made part of the verse and so it became one of the oral traditions [claiming] corruption for example, *al-Manāqib* on the

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1 *Al-Kāfī* and *Ilal [al-Sharaʾiʾ]* via a chain of narration back to Jābir ibn Yāzid.

2 *Al-Kāfī* on the authority of Muhammad ibn Yaḥyā on the authority of Aḥmad ibn Muhammad on the authority of Dawūd al-ʿIjlī on the authority of Zurārah on the authority of Ḥamrān.

authority of al-Bāqir: We covenanted (ᶜ*ahidnā*) words about Muhammad, ᶜAlī, Fatima, Hasan, Husayn and the Imams from their offspring to Adam. That is how it was revealed to Muhammad. Similar to these narrations are other narrations which are cases of application (*ṭaṭbīq*) of His Words, *then whoever follows My guidance* and from My reminder of the People of the Household's guardianship. It is one of the narrations demonstrating continued relevance (*al-jary*) and not exegesis as mistakenly presumed.

(5) Ibn ᶜAbbās said: God's Messenger said: God will guide whoever follows His Book away from error in this world and protect him from the evil of the reckoning on the day of resurrection. That is [what it means when] God says: then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy.[1]

Author's comment: The hadith explains the words, *he shall not go astray* as referring to the world and, *nor be unhappy* as referring to the Hereafter. Thus it supports the aforementioned exegesis of the verse.

(6) *Majmaᶜ [al-bayān]* says about His Words, *his shall be a straitened life*: It is said: It is the punishment of the grave.[2] Abu Hurayrah narrates it via an unconnected chain of transmission (*marfuᶜ*).

(7) *Al-Kāfī* says via its chain of narration on the authority of Abū Baṣīr: I heard al-Ṣadiq say: Whoever dies healthy and prosperous without having gone on Hajj is of those about whom God, Mighty and Sublime is He, said: *and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind.* I said: *Subḥānallāh!* Blind? He replied: Yes. God makes him blind to the path of truth.

Author's comment: Al-Qummī narrates something similar in his exegesis on the authority of al-Ṣādiq.[3] The oral tradition, in restricting the blindness on the day of resurrection to the path of truth that is, the path of success and happiness supports the aforementioned exegesis of the verse.

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1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Tabarānī, Abu Naᶜīm in *al-Ḥilyah* and Ibn Mardawayh.

2 On the authority of Ibn Masᶜūd, Abū Saᶜīd al-Khudrī and al-Saddī.

3 Via a chain of narration back to Muᶜawiyah ibn ᶜAmmār and al-Ṣadūq [narrates it] in *Man Lā Yaḥduruhu al-faqīh* without any chain of narration on his authority.

Verses 127-135

Various threats, promises, proofs, rules and consolation to the Prophet following on sequentially from what precedes it in the chapter.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ۚ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٧﴾

(20:127) ***And thus do We recompense him who is extravagant and does not believe in the communications of his Lord, and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting.***

[The word] *isrāf* means going beyond the limit. It is likely that the *wāw* in *wa kadhālika* (and thus) is resumptory and the demonstrative refers to the aforementioned punishment for whoever turns away from God's reminder and forgets the communications of his Lord because it is transgression on his part of the bounds of servitude and rejection of his Lord's communications. Thus, his punishment is the punishment for whoever forgets and forsakes his Lord's communications after He makes them a covenant with him, and turns away from remembering Him.

… and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and more lasting: This is relative to the chastisement of the world, because it encompasses a person both inwardly and outwardly, and because it lasts forever without any cessation.

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسَاكِنِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي النُّهَىٰ ﴿١٢٨﴾

(20:128) ***Does it not then direct them aright how many of the generations In whose dwelling-places they go about We destroyed before them? Most surely there are signs in this for those endowed with understanding.***

It is likely that *yahdi,* direct, comprises a sense of "make clear". That is: "If they believe in Our communications and try to learn lessons is it

not clear to them that We destroyed many previous generations, in whose dwelling places they walked about? Indeed the way of the people of Mecca in their journeys passed by the dwelling places of ʿĀd in the winding sand dunes of Yemen, the dwelling places of Thamūd and the dwellers of the thicket in Syria and the dwelling places of Lot's people in Palestine".

Most surely there are signs in this for those endowed with understanding: *Uli al-Nuha* means those endowed with understanding.

وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَأَجَلٌ مُسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾

(20:129) ***And had there not been a word (that had) already gone forth from your Lord and an appointed term, it would surely have been made to cleave (to them).***

The context provided by what precedes it dictates that *lizām* should mean *mulazamah* (inseparability)—they are two *maṣdars* of *lazama*, *yulāzim*. A *maṣdar* means a verbal noun. Thus it is a noun meaning the same as the pronoun referring to the destruction referred to in the previous verse. And an appointed term is joined by the conjunction to, a word (that had) already gone forth. The implied meaning is: "And had there not been a word that had already gone forth from your Lord and an appointed term, destruction would have been inseparable from them because they were extravagant and did not believe in their Lord's communications".

Some think that it is possible that *lizām* is a noun of instrument (*ism ālah*) like *hizām* (belt) and *rikāb* (saddle), and others [say] that it is the plural of *lāzim* (concomitant) just as *qiyām* is the plural of *qāʾim* (standing). However neither explanation fits the context to any great extent.

And had there not been a word (that had) already gone forth from your Lord: These words of His appear repeatedly in relation to the Israelites and others in various places in the Qur'an, for example: *… and had not a word already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them* (10:19; 11:110; 41:45).

"An appointed term" is made the end to it in: *… and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed term* (42:14).

It was said in the exegesis of chapters 10 and 11 that it means the word with which He passed judgment when Adam descended to the earth, like: *… and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time* (7:24).

Thus, people are safe from destruction and exterminatory punishment for their extravagance and disbelief between their abiding on the earth and their appointed time unless a Messenger comes and decides between them. He says: *And every nation had a Messenger; so when their Messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (10:47).

This includes the case of exterminatory punishment that follow requested signs if they are not believed in after they come. This nation's state is the same as all other nations as regards being safe from exterminatory punishment through a prior promise from God. As for judgment between them and the Prophet, God put it off to another time as previously inferred from His Words: *And every nation had a Messenger* (10:47).

The verse is from Sūrah Yunus. Some think that it is possible that the word means a promise exclusive to this nation to delay their punishment to the day of resurrection. It was stated above in the exegesis of Sūrah Yunus that the literal meaning of the verses contradicts this. True His Words do indicate that it is delayed to another time as stated above.

Similarly invalid is what others say, that the word means the decision to punish the participants at Badr with the sword. The appointed term is for the rest of the unbelievers of Mecca. [The problem] with this [interpretation] is obvious.

His Words, *and an appointed term*—it was stated above in the exegesis of the beginning of Sūrah al-Anʾām that the appointed term is the time designated by the name which cannot be speeded up or put back as He says: *No people can hasten on their doom nor can they postpone (it)* (15:5).

Some say that an appointed term means the day of resurrection and others that it is the word which had already gone forth from God, making the conjunction explanatory. Neither opinion can be relied upon because there is no evidence.

In short, the verse means: "Were it not for the word that had already gone forth from your Lord—the annexation of Lord to the second person pronoun [constituting] reinforcement and support for the Prophet—dictating their punishment being delayed, the time of the appointed term determined within the condition of delay, their destruction would have been concomitant to them as soon as they were extravagant and disbelieved".

Thus it is clear that the word that had already gone forth and the

appointed term put together are a single, complete reason for their punishment being delayed as opposed to each of them being an independent reason for it as many of them choose [to believe].

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۖ وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾

(20:130) ***Bear then patiently what they say, and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during hours of the night do also glorify (Him) and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased.***

[The verse] enjoins him to bear patiently what they say, making it consequential to what precedes it—as if to say: If it is part of God's decision to delay and not hasten punishing them by taking revenge for what they say, then there remains no [recourse] for you other than to bear patiently, content with what God has decided of the matter, clear Him of what they say—the word of polytheism—and the evil they confront you with, praise Him for the traces of His decision which you face. There is nothing but what is beautiful, so bear patiently what they say *and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him … that you may be well pleased*.

His Words, *and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him* mean absolve Him by engaging in glorifying and praising Him for it, because these incidents which are hard to bear and put up with are attributable to their agents and are nothing but ill—which He should be absolved of. They are linked through His permission to Him and via this link, they are beautiful—nothing but general benefits consequential to them, by which the universe's system is in order—for which God should be glorified and praised.

His Words, *before the rising of the sun and before its setting* are two time qualifiers linked to His Words, *and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him*.

The sentence, *and during hours of the night do also glorify (Him)* (wa min anaʾi l-layli fa sabbiḥ) is similar to: *… and of Me, Me alone, should you be afraid* (wa iyyāyya farhabūn) (2:40).

Anāʾ of the *afʿāl* form is the plural of *anān* or *inwīn* meaning time. *Min* (during) is partitive. The preposition governing the genitive and the word in the genitive governed by the preposition (*al-jār wa al-majrūr*) linked to His Words, *and glorify* are indicative of a qualifier (*ẓarf*), meaning the same, linked to the verb. The implied meaning is: "And some of the times

of the night, glorify therein". *Wa aṭrāf al-nahār* (and during parts of the day) is accusative through removal of the preposition (*bi nazʿal-khāfiḍ*), as they say, joined with a conjunction to, *during hours*. The implied meaning is: "And glorify during parts of the day". Do parts of the day mean what is before sunrise and before sunset or something else? Exegetes disagree over it, as will be alluded to.

The glorifying referred to in the verse is unqualified with nothing in the wording to indicate that it means obligatory daily prayers. Some exegetes incline towards this. However, most of them insist that glorification means prayer, pursuant to what is narrated on the authority of some of the early ones like Qatādah and others.

They say that put altogether, the verse refers to the commandment to pray five times a day. Thus before the rising of the sun means dawn prayer (*salāt al-subḥ*), before its setting means late afternoon prayer (*ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*), and during hours of the night means sunset and evening prayers (*ṣalāta al-maghrib wa al-ʿishāʾ*) and parts of the day means noon prayer (*ṣalāt al-ẓuhr*). It is at the edges of the day (*fī aṭrāf al-nahār*)—even though if the day were cut into half, in the middle of it, after the meridian, there would be two halves—the first and the last. The noon prayer (*ṣalāt al-ẓuhr*) is in the first part of the second half. Thus it is at the edge of the first half because the end of the first half ends with a part connected to the time for it and at the edge of the second half because it begins with a part which is time for it. Hence the time for it, in spite of being a single [time] is an edge to the first half in one respect and an edge to the second half in another, so it can be mentally conceived as two-edged.

As for the use of the word *aṭrāf* in the plural for its time, even though they are two edges, considerationarily, it is because the plural possibly may be used for the dual even though it is commoner for a minimum of three to be considered to constitute a plural in Arabic. It is claimed that *al-nahār* (the day) means the genus, there are two edges in every individual day thus making *aṭrāf* (edges). Discussion of the explanation is protracted among them, both objecting and responding. However, to be fair, the whole basis of the explanation falls far from good sense and taste. After much ado, the middle of the day resists being called the edges of the day on the basis of fanciful suppositions and considerations, completely uncalled for in the context, and without anything taste is satisfied with or disgusted at. As for whoever says that glorification means any glorification and praise—not

the obligatory prayers—either remembering His exaltedness and praising Him in one's heart or in words, for example, *subḥānallāh* (glory be to God) and *al-ḥamdu lillāh* (praise be to God) with one's tongue, or either with one's heart or one's tongue, they then say that before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during hours of the night means dawn prayer (*al-subḥ*) and late afternoon prayer (*al-ʿaṣr*) and times of the night. *Aṭrāf al-nahār* [literally: the edges of the day] means dawn prayer (*al-subḥ*) and late afternoon prayer (*al-ʿaṣr*). As for the need to refer to the two—dawn and late afternoon prayer—as *aṭrāf* (edges) in the plural—their answer to that is similar to that in the previous opinion that is, considering the plural to be for a minimum of two. As for the need for repetition—referring to dawn and late afternoon prayer twice—some of them insist on that, claiming that it is for emphasis, and to show extra regard for glorification at those two times. It appears from [what] some [say] that aṭrāf means dawn prayer, late afternoon prayer and the middle of the day.

The reader will know that a similar objection can be raised to this as was raised to the previous explanation with some minor difference. The problem all arises from *wa aṭrāf al-nahār* as regards its applicability to the middle of the day or dawn and late afternoon.

What can be said is that, *wa aṭrāf al-nahār* is an accompanying object (*mafʿūl maʿahu*) and not a time qualifier, the implied meaning of which is "in" (*fī*), even though exegetes, as far as I recall, do not refer to this. *Aṭrāf al-nahār* [literally: the edges of the day] means before sunrise and before sunset with regard to their both being protracted periods of time. Both have parts, each of which is an edge in relation to the middle of the day so it is correct to call them the edges (*aṭrāf*) of the day just the same as it is correct to call them the two edges (*ṭarafay*) of the day. That is the same as [the period] before sunrise being called the beginning of the day with regard to its oneness and the beginnings of the day with regard to its being made up of parts. [The period] before sunset is called the end of the day or the ends of the day. Thus, the meaning of the verse can be construed as being similar to: "And glorify your Lord by the praising of Him before sunrise and sunset—which are the edges of the day—and glorify at some times of the night along with the edges of the day during which you have been commanded to glorify".

So, the reader may ask, how can it be correct for *aṭrāf al-nahār* to be an accompanying object when it is a time qualifier for the glorification

implying *fī* (in)—like *anāʾ al-layyl* being a time qualifier?

Reply: *Anāʾ al-layyl* is not literally (*bi lafzihi*) a circumstantial qualifier. How could it be if it follows *min* (of), so it makes no sense to infer *fī* (in) alongside it. It is only through it [that is, *min*] that it indicates the circumstance (*ẓarf*). *Wa min anāʾ al-layyl fa sabbiḥu* means: Glorify in some of the times of the night. *Wa aṭrāf al-nahār* should be the same as that meaning: along with the edges of the day in which you glorify. The time qualification is implicitly indicated on both sides. Furthermore, if we were to say that glorification in the verse does not mean the obligatory prayers, it means glorification during parts of the beginning and parts of the end of the day and parts of the night along with the parts of the beginning and end of the day. This does not necessitate the problem of repetition or of using the plural for fewer than three, as is obvious.

If we were to say that glorification in the verse means the obligatory daily [prayers], the verse would only contain the instruction to pray dawn, late afternoon, sunset and evening prayers—like the instruction in: *And keep up prayer in the two parts of the day and in the first hours of the night* (11:114).

Reference in the verse under discussion to the two times as the edges of the day (*aṭrāf al-nahār*) may be to allude to the protracted nature of the two times.

There would be no harm in the verse containing four of the five daily prayers because the chapter—as will be alluded to—was one of the first chapters to be revealed in Mecca. Exhaustive oral traditions narrated by both the Sunnis and the Shias indicate that five obligatory daily prayers were only prescribed during the ascension—as said to be five in Sūrah al-Isrāʾ, revealed after the ascension: *Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation* (17:78).

It may be that out of the obligatory daily prayers, four were prescribed when Sūrah Ṭā Hā and similarly Sūrah Hūd were revealed; noon prayer had not yet been prescribed. Indeed, that is the apparent meaning of the two verses, one in Ṭā Hā and the other in Hūd. Obviously the same objection cannot be raised to this explanation as was raised to the opinion that glorification means the five prayers and that *aṭrāf al-nahār* applies to the time for the noon prayer (*ṣalāt al-ẓuhr*) that is, the middle of the day. Contemplate on this.

Furthermore, *that you may be well pleased* [picks up] the previous

thread in which [people's] turning away from remembrance of their Lord, forgetting His communications, being extravagant in their affair, not believing and then their punishment being delayed were referred to. Their being told to be patient, to glorify and praise dictates that being well pleased means being well pleased with God's decree and assignment.

It means: "So be patient and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him so that you will be well pleased with what God has decided". It refers back to His Words such as: *And seek assistance through patience and prayer* (2:45).

The reason for it is that repetition of remembrance of Him by declaring His action to be free of any flaw or disgrace, remembering Him with beautiful praise and persisting at it makes the soul take comfort in doing so, increasing in it and increased comfort in the beauty of His action. Declaring Him to be flawless causes it to become embedded in [the soul] and to appear in one's sight, and distorted perceptual and mental notions to vanish. The soul is naturally disposed to be pleased with what it loves, and loves only that which is beautiful—free of all ugliness and disgrace. Constantly mentioning Him through glorification and praise causes contentment with His decree.

It is said, *that you may be well pleased* means intercession and the elevated station in God's sight.

It is (also) said, *that you may be well pleased* means what God promised—assistance and to strengthen the religion in this world, and, intercession and Heaven in the Hereafter.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۚ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾

(20:131) ***And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendor of this world's life, that We may thereby try them; and the sustenance (given) by your Lord is better and more abiding.***

Stretching the eye means stretching and drawing out its sight. There is in it rational metaphor. Further, stretching and drawing it out to something is metonymy for being attached to it and loving it. *Azwāj* is said to mean different classes of unbelievers, or to men and women couples among them which would mean households. *Azwaj* appears in the indefinite to

make little [of them] and show that they should not be paid any attention to.

The splendor of this world's life is like exegesis of His Words, *that with which We have provided*. It is made accusative by an implied verb—"by which We mean …" or "We have assigned to them the splendor of this world's life"—that is, its embellishment and delight. *Fitnah* means test or trial or [as is] claimed [in the alternative], it means punishment because an abundance of money and children is a kind of punishment from God to them. As He says: *And let not their property and their children excite your admiration; God only wishes to chastise them with these in this world and (that) their souls may depart while they are unbelievers* (9:85).

… and the sustenance (given) by your Lord is better and more abiding: In the context of its being made the opposite of what [the others] have been provided with—the splendor of this world's life—it means the sustenance of the Hereafter which is better and more abiding.

[Put all together] it means: "Do not stretch your gaze to the embellishment and delight of this world's life with which We have provided several classes or couples of them, to test them through what We have provided. That with which your Lord will provide you in the Hereafter is better and more abiding".

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا ۖ لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ۗ
وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿١٣٢﴾

(20:132) ***And enjoin prayer on your followers, and steadily adhere to it; We ask you no provision; We provide you, and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil).***

The verse has a thread which fits in with the thread of all the other verses in the chapter—so it is Meccan like all the others. Besides, we have not come across anyone who claims that they are an exception, considering them to be Medinite. Thus, *ahlak*—in accordance with what it applied to at the time of revelation—means Khadījah, the Prophet's wife and ʿAlī who was of his family and [lived] in his house. Alternatively, [it means] the two of them and some of the Prophet's daughters.

The opinions of some of them, that it means his wives, daughters and son-in-law ʿAlī, and of others, that it means his wives, daughters and relatives from Banū Hāshim and [Banū] al-Muṭṭalib, and yet others, that it

means all his followers from his nation, are not correct. True, there is no harm in the first opinion as regards to the verse's continued relevance and applicability but not as regards the circumstances in which it was revealed because the verse is Meccan—the Prophet did not have any other wives apart from Khadījah in Mecca.

It is apparent from the relationship of opposites between the two phrases in His Words, *We ask you no provision; We provide you* that His asking for Himself is metonymy for I have no need for you and you are exigent and dependent on Us. Thus it means the same as: *And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me. I do not desire from them any sustenance and I do not desire that they should feed Me. Surely God is the Bestower of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong* (51:56-58).

Since the verse ends with, *and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil)* it is equivalent to the verse: *There does not reach God their flesh nor their blood, but to Him is acceptable the guarding (against evil) on your part* (22:37).

Hence, the view of some exegetes who have interpreted "We ask you no provision" as charging him with the provision of the creatures or himself is not correct. His Words, *and the (good) end is for guarding (against evil)* have been discussed repeatedly. It would not be surprising if, with regard to the commandment being restricted to instructing his family to pray, along with what is in the two previous verses—His alone being instructed to perform four daily prayers, to be patient and not to stretch his eyes to what the unbelievers have been provided with—it could be inferred from the verse that the chapter, or this verse specifically, was revealed at the beginning of the Prophetic mission. Among what is narrated on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd is that Sūrah Ṭā Hā was one of the very early first sūrahs (*al-ʿitāq al-uwal*).

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣٣﴾

(20:133) *And they say: Why does he not bring to us a sign from his Lord? Has not there come to them a clear evidence of what is in the previous books?*

[This is] a direct quote of the Meccan polytheists. They only said this, alluding to the Qur'an—that it is not a sign indicating prophecy—"so

that he might bring us a sign as the ancients were sent". A *bayyinah* is a clarificatory (*mubīn*) or clear (*bayyin*) piece of evidence. Alternatively it is said that it is an explanation (*bayān*). Whatever the case may be, their words, *Why does he not bring to us a sign from his Lord?* are goading with the motive of insulting the Qur'an and showing the Prophet to be powerless by suggesting another miraculous sign. His Words, *Has not there come to them a clear evidence …* are a response to it. It means, based on the first interpretation of *bayyinah*: Did not clear proof and evidence—that is, the Qur'an—come to them, testifying to and explaining whatever true knowledge and religious laws are in the first books—the Torah, the Gospels and all the other Heavenly Scriptures. It was brought by a man not previously taught by a teacher or dictated to by anyone.

Based on the second interpretation: Did not explanation come to them of what is in the first books—tidings of past nations who suggested miraculous signs to their Prophets. [The Prophets] brought them, and their bringing them was the reason for their destruction and extermination when they did not believe in them after they came to them. So why do they not refrain from suggesting a sign beyond the Qur'an? There are parallels to both interpretations in His Words.

وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَذِلَّ وَنَخْزَىٰ ﴿١٣٤﴾

(20:134) ***And had We destroyed them with chastisement before this, they would certainly have said: O our Lord! why didst Thou not send to us a Messenger, for then we should have followed Thy communications before that we met disgrace and shame.***

It is likely that the [masculine] pronoun in *min qablihi* (before this) refers to the *bayyinah* [feminine] in the previous verse with regard to the fact that it is the Qur'an [masculine]. It means: Had We destroyed them with punishment because of their extravagance and disbelief before the proof had come to them, the argument against them would not have been complete, they would have had a case against Us and they would have said: *O our Lord! why didst Thou not send to us a Messenger? For then we should have followed Thy communications before that we met disgrace and shame.* It is said that the pronoun refers to the Prophet known from the content of the previous verse [that is, *min qablihi* means before him] as testified to by

their words, *why didst Thou not send to us a Messenger?* This explanation is likely with regard to the literal meaning of the words, whereas the first explanation is [likely] with regard to the [actual] meaning. The words, *for then we should have followed Thy communications* support it. It does not say: "For then we should have followed Thy Messenger".

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿١٣٥﴾

(20:135) ***Say: Every one (of us) is awaiting, therefore do await: So you will come to know who is the follower of the even path and who goes aright.***

Tarabbuṣ means waiting and *al-ṣirāt al-sawiyy* means the even path. *Kull mutarabbiṣ* means every one of us and you is watching, waiting so we are awaiting what God has promised us with regard to you, with regard to the advancement of His religion and the completion of His light, while you hope for calamities to befall us so that the true invitation will be thwarted. Every one of us and you is following a path to his objective so watch and wait. There is in it a threat—you will realize which group out of us and you are those on the straight path, which leads them to their destination and which are those who are guided to their destination. There is in it [an allusion to] the great battle and tidings of victory.

Examining Narrations

(1) *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī says about His Words, *and an appointed term, it would surely have been made to cleave (to them).* [It means] punishment would have descended upon them. However, they were put off to an appointed term.

(2) The Prophet said regarding His Words, *and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him before the rising of the sun and before its setting*: "Before the rising of the sun" [means] dawn prayer (*ṣalāt al-subḥ*) and "before its setting" [means] late afternoon prayer (*ṣalāt al-ʿaṣr*).[1]

(3) *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī says regarding His Words, *and during hours of*

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn ʿAsākir on the authority of Jarīr.

the night do also glorify (Him) and during parts of the day: In the morning and the evening.

Author's comment: It supports what was said above.

(4) al-Bāqir said regarding His Words, *and during hours of the night do also glorify (Him) and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased*: It means performance of good deeds voluntarily (*ṭaṭawwuʿ*) during the day.[1]

Author's comment: It is based on the exegesis of *tasbīḥ* as any prayer or any praise.

(5) *Tafsīr,* Al-Qummī says regarding His Words, *And do not stretch your eyes …* that Abū ʿAbdillāh said: When this verse was revealed, God's Messenger sat up straight. He then said: The soul of whoever is not consoled by God's condolence devotes itself solely to the world in distress. Whoever's eye follows what is in people's hands, his anxiety will be prolonged and his anger will not be healed. The lifespan is shortened of whoever does not know that God has bestowed any blessing other than food or drink upon him, and his punishment will draw near.

(6) Abū Rāfiʾ said: The Prophet put up a guest but the Prophet did not have anything suitable so he sent me to a Jewish man to sell or lend us flour until the new moon of Rajab. He said: No, only with a security. Thereafter, I went to the Prophet and he said: Verily, by God I am most assuredly trustworthy in Heaven and trustworthy on earth. If he lends to me and sells to me I will repay him. Take my iron body armor to him. Thereafter I did not leave his presence before this verse was revealed: *And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them* as if to console him for the world.[2]

Author's comment: The purport of the verse, especially the end does not fit the story.

(7) When it was revealed, *And enjoin prayer on your family* the Prophet would come to ʿAlī's door for eight months, saying: Prayer, may God have mercy on you. *God only desires to keep*

1 *Al-Kāfī* via its chain of narration on the authority of Zurārah

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn Rahawayh, al-Bazzāz, Abū Yaʾlā, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Kharāʾiṭī in *Makārim al-Akhlāq* and Abū Naʾīm in *al-Maʾrifah*.

away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying.[1]

Author's comment: It is [also] narrated in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* on the authority of al-Khudriyy but it says nine months instead of eight months.

(8) Words to the same effect are narrated in *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* in al-Riḍā's seated gathering with al-Maʾmūn on [al-Riḍā's] authority. Al-Qummī also narrates it in an elevated ascription (*marfūʾ*) manner in his exegesis. Qualifying it with nine months is based on what the narrator witnessed and not on specifying what he actually did. Evidence of that is what is narrated by the Shaykh in *al-Amālī* via his chain of narration on the authority of Abu Humayrāʾ: I witnessed the Prophet come to ʿAlī and Fatimah's door on forty mornings, take hold of the doorposts and say: Peace be upon you, People of the Household and God's mercy and blessings. May God have mercy on you. *God only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.*

Author's comment: The apparent meaning of the narration would be that the verse is Medinite but no one says that as far as I recall. The intention may be to explain that he came to the door in the Medina, acting on the verse even though it was revealed in Mecca, even though this [strays] far from the wording.

There is in Al-Qummī's narration, to which we alluded, that which supports this interpretation, namely: "He continued doing that every day he was present in Medina until he departed from the world". The hadith on his instructing the People of the Household to pray is also narrated via other routes beyond those which have been referred to.

(9) ʿAbdallāh ibn Salām said: Whenever hardship or straitness would descend upon his family, he would instruct them to pray and recite: *And enjoin prayer on your family …*[2]

Author's comment: Words to the same effect are narrated on the authority of Aḥmad in al-Zuhd, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab*

1 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Ibn Mardawayh, Ibn ʿAsākir and Ibn al-Najjār on the authority of Abu Saʾīd al-Khudrī.

2 *Al-Durr al-manthūr* cited by Abū ʿUbayd, Saʿīd ibn Manṣūr, Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awṣat*, Abū Naʿīm in al-Ḥilyah and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿab al-Imān* via an authentic chain of narration.

al-Imān on the authority of Thābit on his authority. There is in it an allusion to *tasbīḥ* (glorification) having a wider meaning in the verse.

End of Chapter

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The end. All praise be to Almighty God.

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